

Wales

Mediæval Wales

The origin of Wales is perhaps best summarised by Norman F. Cantor: “Mediæval Wales arose out of the confusion caused by the withdrawal of the occupying Roman legions from the British Isles in the early fifth century and the resultant raids and settlement of the invading Germanic tribes from the Continent. The original Celtic inhabitants of Britain were now scattered to the more remote areas, where they retained much of their ancient culture. Regarded as ‘foreigners’ by the Anglo-Saxon settlers, one such isolated group of Celts became the Welsh.”

. . . Norman F. Cantor (ed.) *The Encyclopædia of the Middle Ages* New York, 1999, page 430

Mediæval Wales consisted of a host of petty kingdoms, each overseen by a King or Prince; many of whom were really little more than tribal chieftains. The larger and more influential of these kingdoms were Dyfed and Gwent in the south, Powys in the midlands and Gwynedd in the north. Gwynedd proved to be the most influential. The Welsh political system resembled the English system in that a ruler presided over a clan, and clan members vowed allegiance on the basis of the personal strength of the ruler. However, according to Welsh law, on the death of a ruler, the kingdom was divided among the heirs. This, along with a poor economy, lack of town development and the absence of a feudal system inhibited royal expansion.

Throughout much of the middle ages, the internal borders of this multitude of petty kingdoms were in a constant state of flux; but by the 8th century, the overall land area of Wales had acquired an approximate eastern border, and the adjacent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms suffered from Welsh raids. This prompted the Mercian King Offa (reigned 757 - 796) to commission an earth embankment and ditch known as “Offa’s Dyke”. It was never garrisoned; and its purpose was to denote rather than to defend the frontier. As well, it appears that there was consultation with the Welsh kings of Powys and Gwent as in some places fertile land and defensible positions were left under Welsh control. In other places, no embankment was raised where a forest or river served to denote the border.

As with most early mediæval or “dark age” genealogies, the line shown here must be viewed with suspicion. All the names mentioned can be found in Nennius: *Historia Brittonum* (*History of the Britons*) and/or Geoffrey of Monmouth: *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*); but these works also show legendary figures such as King Arthur. The line from Generation Sixteen (Cynan Tindaethwy ap Rhodri, King of Gwynedd, died 816) on can be considered accurate. Everything from this point on is shown in John Davies: *A History of Wales*, London, 1993 and elsewhere; see *Sources*.

Generation One

Tegid, who was also known by the Latinised name of Tacitus.

Generation Two

Padarn Beisrudd. Flourished circa 383

Padarn Beisrudd was also known by the Latinised name of Paternus of the Red Robe which suggests that he wore the cloak of a Roman officer, and it is possible that he had been invested with his cloak as part of the efforts of Magnus Maximus to secure the borders of Britannia before departing with his army. Padarn was stationed in the Clackmannanshire area of Scotland. This is on the north side of the Firth of Forth between Stirling and Fife.

Generation Three

Ællegrn, who was also known by the Latinised name of *Æternus*.

Generation Four

Cunedda Wledig, King of Gwynedd. Flourished circa 440.

Cunedda Wledig came from Manaw Gododin on the Firth of Forth with his eight sons and one grandson to drive the Irish out of north west Wales circa 440. Cunedda founded the Kingdom of Gwynedd. He married **Gwawl**, a daughter of Coel Hen, who was also known by the Latinised name of Caelius Votepacus. Coel Hen was an ancient British King in the north of Britain and is “Old King Coel” of nursery rhyme fame. (See *Wales: Coel Hen*)

Generation Five

Einion Yrth, King of Gwynedd. Flourished circa 470.

Generation Six

Cadwallon ap Einion, King of Gwynedd. Flourished circa 500.

Cadwallon was also known as Cadwallon Lawhir (the Long Handed) because he had unusually long arms. Cadwallon ruled around the same time as the legendary King Arthur and his victory over the Saxons at Mons Badonicus.

Generation Seven

Maelgwn ap Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd

Died in 547 or 549 at Rhes of the yellow plague which had originated in Egypt.

Maelgwn was also known as Maelgwn Gwynedd and Maelgwn Hir (the Tall). Maelgwn has been portrayed as a ruthless, wicked ruler of impressive sinfulness. He was also a man of culture, and many poets and musicians attended his court at Deganwyand. He entered a monastery, perhaps to in an attempt to atone for previous sins.

Generation Eight

Rhun ap Maelgwyn, King of Gwynedd, also known as Rhun Hir. Died circa 586.

Generation Nine

Beli ap Rhun, King of Gwynedd. Died in 599.

Generation Ten

Iago ap Beli, King of Gwynedd. Died in 616, reputed benefactor of Bangor Cathedral.

Generation Eleven

Cadfan ap Iago, King of Gwynedd. Died circa 625, reputed to have been a wise king.

Generation Twelve

Cadwallon ap Cadfan, King of Gwynedd.

Died in late 633 or 634, killed in battle.

Cadwallon killed Edwin of Northumbria at the battle of Meigen (Hatfield near Doncaster) in 632. In 633, he killed Edwin's successors, Osric of Deria and Eanfrith of Bernicia. The Venerable Bede declared that it was Cadwallon's intention to exterminate the English race. However, Cadwallon himself was killed in late 633 or 634 by Eanfrith's brother Oswald. This defeat denoted the extinction of the possibility of restoring Brythonic supremacy in Britain.

Cadwallon married a sister of Penda, King of Mercia; and they had a son:

- **Cadwaladr ap Cadwallon**, mentioned next.

Generation Thirteen

Cadwaladr Fendigaid (the Blessed) ap Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd.

Died in 664 of plague.

Calwaladr was still a child at the time of his father's death in 633 or 634 and he was excluded from the throne of Gwynedd for twenty years or so by Cadafael ap Cynfeddw who was not of royal blood. Calwaladr eventually succeeded as King of Gwynedd circa 655; perhaps by killing Cadafael ap Cynfeddw.

Generation Fourteen

Idwal Iwrch ap Cadwaladr, King of Gwynedd. Died in 712

Generation Fifteen

Rhodri Molwynog, King of Gwynedd. Died in 754

Rhodri had the following sons:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hywel ap Rhodri | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynan Tindaethwy ap Rhodri, mentioned next. |
|---|--|--|

Generation Sixteen

Cynan Tindaethwy ap Rhodri, King of Gwynedd.

Died in 816

Cynan and his brother Hywel were somehow excluded from the throne by a distant cousin Caradog ap Meirion from the time of their father's death in 754 until 798. Cynan shared the Kingdom of Gwynedd with his brother Hywel ap Rhodri. Cynan died in 816; and Hywel ruled Gwynedd until his death in 825. At this time, Hywel was succeeded by Cynan's grandson Merfyn Frych. (See Generation Eighteen)

Cynan Tindaethwy ap Rhodri had a daughter:

- **Esyllt** (also Ethyllt and Ethil), mentioned next.

Generation Seventeen

Esyllt, daughter of the King of Gwynedd.

Esyllt (also Ethyllt and Ethil), married **Gwriad**, said to be from the area around the Firth of Forth or perhaps from the Isle of Man. He is said to have been descended from Coel Hen, an ancient British King who is perhaps better remembered as “Old King Coel” of nursery rhyme fame. (See *Wales: Coel Hen*) Presumably, Ethyllt moved either to the Isle of Man or the area around the Firth of Forth as this is where her son Merfyn (mentioned next) came from.

Ethyllt and Gwriad had a son:

- **Merfyn Frych (the Freckled)**, mentioned next.

Generation Eighteen

Merfyn Frych (the Freckled), King of Gwynedd

Died in 844

Merfyn became King of Gwynedd in 825 on the death of his mother Ethyllt’s uncle Hywel ap Rhodri. Merfyn came from either the Isle of Man or the Firth of Forth area; and may have held some position of authority on the Island of Anglesey prior to 825. He married Nest, daughter of Cadell ap Brochwel, King of Powys, and they had a son:

- **Rhodri Mawr**, mentioned next.

Generation Nineteen

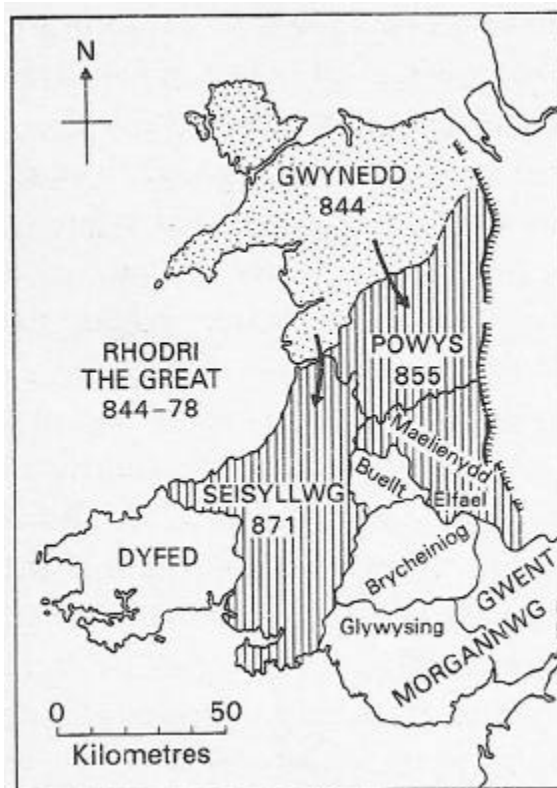
Rhodri Mawr (the Great) ap Merfyn, Prince of Wales

Died in 877 or 878, killed in battle with the English as was his son Gwriad.

Rhodri Mawr ap Merfyn became King of Gwynedd in 844 on the death of his father Merfyn Frych; King of Powys in 855 on the death of his uncle Caell ap Brochwel; and King of Seisyllwg in 871 on the death of his brother-in-law Gwgon. Rhodri Mawr was the first ruler recognised as Prince of Wales. He defeated the Danish leader Horn in 856.

Rhodri Mawr ap Merfyn married Angharad, daughter of Meuric ap Dyfnwal ap Asthi, King of Seisyllwg, and they had the following sons:

- **Anarawd ap Rhodri**, mentioned next.
- **Cadell ap Rhodri, King of Seisyllwg** (See *Wales: Deheubarth*) had a son:
 - Hywel Dda (the Good) ap Cadell, Prince of Deheubarth who united much of Wales.
- **Merfyn ap Rhodri, King of Powys**. (See *Wales: Powys*)
- Gwriad ap Rhodri, killed in battle in 877 or 878, as was his father.



Generation Twenty

Anarawd ap Rhodri, King of Gwynedd

Died in 916

Anarawd became King of Gwynedd in 878 on the death of his father. He abandoned an alliance with the Danish Kingdom of York and acknowledged Ælfred the Great as overlord; as did his brothers and other lesser rulers. The precise nature of this overlordship is not known, and there was an attempt to portray this submission as a desire for unity among Christian rulers against the pagan Danes. However, this recognition by Welsh rulers that the King of England had claims upon them would be a central fact in the subsequent history of Wales.

Anarawd ap Rhodri Mawr had the following sons:

- **Idwal Foel (the Bald) ap Anarawd**, mentioned next.
- Elisedd ap Anarawd

Generation Twenty-one

Idwal Foel (the Bald) ap Anarawd, King of Gwynedd

Died in 942 in battle.

Idwal became King of Gwynedd in 916 on the death of his father. He accepted English overlordship in 918. In 942, he was slain along with his brother Elisedd during an unsuccessful revolt against the English.

Idwal Foel ap Anarawd married Avandreg and they had the following children:

- Iago ap Idwal who was deposed by Hywel Dda (the Good) ap Cadell, Prince of Deheubarth. (See *Wales: Deheubarth*) After Hywel's death, Iago and his brother Ieuaf defeated the sons of Hywel Dda. Iago became King of Gwynedd and later deposed Ieuaf.
- Ieuaf (Levan) ap Idwal who was deposed by Hywel Dda as was his brother Iago. After Hywel's death, Ieuaf ruled part of Gwynedd and maybe part of Powys until he was deposed by his brother. As usual in Wales, the situation was very confused as these rulers sought to extend their own petty kingdoms at the expense of their relatives and neighbours.
- **Meurig ap Idwal**, mentioned next
- Rhodri ap Idwal

Generation Twenty-two

Meurig ap Idwal, Died (slain) in 986.

Generation Twenty-three

Idwal ap Meurig, Died (slain) in 996 in exile.

Generation Twenty-four

Iago ap Idwal, King of Gwynedd

Died in 1039, murdered by Gruffydd ap Llewelyn.

Iago ap Idwal was at first excluded from the throne of Gwynedd by Llywelyn ap Seisyll from 1018 to 1023. Iago ap Idwal was King of Gwynedd from 1023 to 1039 when he was murdered

by Llywelyn ap Seisyll's son Gruffydd ap Llewelyn who then ruled over the whole of Wales from 1057 until his death in 1063.

Iago ap Idwal had a son:

- **Cynan ap Iago**, mentioned next.

Generation Twenty-five

Cynan ap Iago

Died circa 1060

Cynan ap Iago was exluded from the throne by Gruffydd ap Llewelyn and exiled in Dublin, Ireland where he met his wife Ragnhildir, a great granddaughter of Brian Bóru. Cynan married Ragnhildir (also Ranult and Ragnailt), daughter of Olaf who was a son of Sitric of the Silken Beard, Norse King of Dublin. (See *Ireland*, Generation Two)

Cynan and Ragnhildir had a son:

- **Gruffydd ap Cynan**, mentioned next.

Generation Twenty-six

Gruffydd ap Cynan, King of Gwynedd

Born circa 1055 in Dublin, Ireland

Died in 1137 and interred at Bangor Cathedral

Gruffydd ap Cynan defeated and killed Trahaearn ap Cardogog in the battle of Mynydd Carn in 1081 and became King of Gwynedd in 1081. The situation was chaotic and he was deposed once or twice by the Normans early in his reign. At one point, Gruffydd took refuge in Ireland. Although there were a couple of invasions from England, Gruffydd ruled Gwynedd more or less continuously from about 1101 until his death in 1137.

Gruffydd married **Angharad** who was a daughter of Owain ap Edwin, Lord Tegeingl and a greatx2 granddaughter of Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his wife Godgifu, who was the famous "Lady Godiva" who rode nude on her horse through Coventry. (See *Wales: Lady Godiva*) Gruffydd and Angharad had the following children:

- **Owain Gwynedd ap Gruffydd**, mentioned next.
- Cadwallader ap Gruffydd who was driven into exile in England after being involved in the murder of Anarawd ap Gruffydd, King of Deheubarth in 1143 and then having further arguments with his brother Owain.
- **Susanna** who married **Madoc ap Maredudd** (See *Wales: Powys*, Generation Eight)

Generation Twenty-seven

Owain Gwynedd ap Gruffydd, King of Gwynedd and Prince of Wales

Died on November 28, 1170 and was interred at Bangor Cathedral.

Owain seemed to prefer the title of "Prince of Wales" as it indicated that he was the ruler of all Wales. This title defined his position in the empire that to an ever increasing extent exercised lordship over him while elevating him above English barons and other lesser rulers in Wales.

Owain took advantage of the troubled reign of King Stephen of England (1135 – 1154) and seized some neighbouring territories. In 1157, Henry II led an army into Wales and Owain acknowledged Henry II as overlord. Owain kept all the territory he had gained with the exception of Tegeingl in the extreme north east.

Owain married Gwladys, a daughter of Llywarch ap Trahaearn ap Cardogog whose father Trahaearn ap Cardogog had been killed in 1081 by Owain's father Gruffydd ap Cynan. (See Generation Twenty-six) It would seem that our ancestors didn't hold long grudges over killings and murders, perhaps because these events were so common.

Owain and Gwladys had the following children:

- **Iorwerth Drwyndwn ap Owain Gwynedd**, mentioned next.
- Maelgwin who ruled Anglesey but was deposed by his brother Dafydd.
- Dafydd who deposed, murdered or exiled most of his brothers thereby succeeding his father as Prince of Gwynedd from 1170 to 1194. His mother may have been Christina, shown below. He married Emma (or Emme) Plantagenet, a half sister of King Henry II Curtmantle of England. (See *Plantagenet*, Generation Five) He was defeated by and yielded sovereignty to his nephew Llewelyn ap Iorworth in 1194.
- Rhodri who was deposed by Dafydd but later ruled part of Gwynedd.
- Additional sons and daughters.

Owain married second to his cousin Christina (or Cristin). Christina and Owain were both grandchildren of Owain ap Edwin, Lord Tegeingl. They had the following children:

- Dafydd ap Owain Gwynedd, Prince of Gwynedd who is shown above. It is uncertain whether his mother was Gwladys or Christina.
- Additional sons and daughters.

Owain had a large number of children by assorted girlfriends and other associates without undergoing the formality of a church ceremony. Among these children is reputed to have been:

- Prince Madoc and his brother Riryd who are said to have sailed to North America in the late 12th century. They were eager to get away from the competition between their many brothers. Madoc and Riryd led a group of presumably peace loving countrymen to a new land where they could start afresh . . . or so the story goes.

According to the legend, Madoc and Riryd sailed west in 1170 with 2 boats and a number of colonists, and landed in the area of what is now Mobile, Alabama. One of the boats returned to Wales, fitted out an expedition of 10 ships, and returned to North America to stay. Prince Madoc and his settlers moved up the Alabama and Coosa Rivers to the Chattanooga area. They built a series of forts along the route, one of which at DeSoto Falls, Alabama, is said to have been nearly identical in setting, layout, and method of construction to Dolwyddelan Castle in Gwynedd, Wales.

Prince Madoc is also said to have settled in the West Indies and Mexico where he became known as Quetzacoatl, the white Aztec god. However, according to the most popular and persistent version of the legend, the Welsh settlers moved further and further inland from Alabama, and eventually moved in with the Mandan Indians on the Missouri River in North Dakota where they were assimilated into the aboriginal culture.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, tales appeared to the effect that various aboriginal tribes of North America spoke a form of ancient Welsh, had pale complexions and blue eyes, cherished ancient relics including Bibles printed in Welsh, and so on. The rumours were so persistent that in 1790's a Welsh clergyman named John Evans was appointed to search for Madoc's descendants. After an adventurous journey as far west as the Rocky Mountains, John Evans reported that he had met no Welsh-speaking aboriginal peoples. He wrote: "from the intercourse I have with Indians from the latitude 35° to 49° I think you may with safety inform my friends that they (Welsh speaking aboriginal peoples) have no existence." Lewis and Clark came to a similar conclusion, but the legends persisted.

In November 1953, The D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution), motivated by legends and completely undeterred by the lack of evidence, erected a bronze tablet on Fort Morgan, Mobile Bay that reads: "In memory of Prince Madoc, a Welsh explorer, who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind, with the Indians, the Welsh language."

Generation Twenty-eight

Iorwerth Drwyndwn ap Owain Gwynedd

Died circa 1174 at Pennant Mehangell

Iorwerth's name "Drwyndwn" means "the Broken-Nosed"; and this may indictate some deformity or disability. This may be the reason why he did not succeed his father even though he was the eldest son. Iorwerth married Margaret (See *Wales: Powys*, Generation Eight) and they had a son:

- **Llywelyn Fawr "the Great" ap Iowerth**, mentioned next.

Generation Twenty-nine

Llywelyn Fawr "the Great" ap Iowerth, Prince of Wales

Born in 1173 probably at the old Dolwyddelan Castle.

Died on November 4, 1240 at Aberconwy.

The arms of Llywelyn are described as "Quarterly, gules and or, four lions passant guardant counterchanged" which means "a shield quartered; the first and fourth quarter red with a gold lion walking; second and third quarters gold with a red lion walking."

Llywelyn defeated his Uncle Dafydd in 1194 and was acknowledged as overlord by other Welsh princes. At first Llywelyn was on good terms with King John of England and he married King John's daughter Joan in 1206. However, after King John attacked him in 1210, Llywelyn allied himself with the barons who opposed King John. When the barons pressured King John to sign the Magna Charta in 1215, the rights of Llywelyn and the Welsh were recognised.

Llwllyn married first to Gwenllian.

Llwllyn married second to Joan, a daughter of King John of England. (See *Angevin Kings*, Generation Two) Llwllyn and Joan had the following children:



Llewellyn ap Iorwerth

- Dafydd ap Llywelyn Fawr who succeeded his father as Prince of Wales from 1240 until his death in 1246. The throne then passed to his nephew Llywelyn ap Gruffydd ap Llywelyn Fawr.
- Elen (Helena, Helen) who married first to John le Scot, Earl of Huntington and second to Robert de Quincy. (*See De Quincy*, Generation Four)

Llwelyn married third to Tangwystyl Goch and they had the following children:

- Gruffydd ap Llywelyn Fawr, his son:
 - Llywelyn ap Gruffydd ap Llywelyn Fawr, also known as “Llywelyn the Last”, Prince of Wales from 1246 to 1282). Llywelyn paid homage to King Henry III in 1247, but after rebelling several times he was killed in battle on December 11, 1282 during the reign of King Edward I. Llwelyn was the last of the Welsh princes to rule over an independent Wales.
- Gwladus Ddu “the Dark”
- **Helen**, mentioned next.

Generation Thirty

Helen Born circa 1230

Helen is shown in *The Complete Peerage* vol.V, p.373 as a daughter of Llywelyn Fawr “the Great” ap Iowerth, Prince of Wales and his third wife Tangwystyl Goch. Helen must not be confused with her half sister Helen, a daughter of Llywelyn and his second wife Joan, a daughter of King John of England. (*See Generation Twenty-nine.*)

Helen married first to Malcolm MacDuff, Earl of Fife who must have been quite old because he succeeded his uncle in 1228, likely before Helen was born. When he died, his son and heir Colbran was underage and had been knighted in his teens in 1264. Colbran must have married young because when he died in 1270, he could not have been more than 24 and his heir was his son Duncan who was only 8 years of age. Helen and Malcolm MacDuff had a son:

- Colbran MacDuff, Earl of Fife

Helen married second to Donald, 6th Earl of Mar who was a descendant of the ancient Kings of Scotland. (*See Scotland: Donald Bane*, Generation Six) Helen and Donald had the following children:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret (Mary) of Mar • Isabel of Mar, mentioned next. • Garnait (Gratney) of Mar, 7th Earl of Mar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duncan of Mar • Alexander of Mar |
|--|---|

Generation Thirty-one

Isabel of Mar

Isabel married to **Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland** (*See Scotland*, Generation Twenty-nine) and they had a daughter:

- **Princess Marjorie Bruce** (*See Scotland*, Generation Thirty)

For the continuation of this line, see *Scotland*, Generation Thirty

Sources

- Sewell Vincent Sample (1928 – 2005): *Letters* (perhaps based on John Edward Lloyd: *A History of Wales: From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1911.)
- The Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, Everyman Press, London, 1912 (Translation by Rev. James Ingram, London, 1823)
- Richard Thomson: *An Historical Essay on the Magna Charta of King John*, London, 1829
- Sir John Balfour Paul: *The Scots Peerage*, 1904 - 1914, 9 volumes
- The Book of History* (18 Volumes), London, 1914
- David C. Douglas: *William the Conqueror*, Berkeley, California, 1964
- Samuel Eliot Morison: *The European Discovery of America*, New York, 1971
- Wales Tourist Board: *Wales Castles & Historic Places*, Cardiff, 1990
- Berhard Grun, *The Timetables of History*, New York, 1991
- John Davies: *A History of Wales*, London, 1993 (published in Welsh as *Hanes Cymru* in 1990)
- Norman F. Cantor (ed.) *The Encyclopæ dia of the Middle Ages*, New York, 1999
- Frederick L. Weis and Walter L. Sheppard: *Ancestral Roots*, 7th Edition, Baltimore, 1999
- Frederick L. Weis and Walter L. Sheppard: *The Magna Charta Sureties, 1215*, Baltimore, 1999
- G.E. Cokayne: *The Complete Peerage*, Sutton Publishing, 2003
- Douglas Richardson: *Plantagenet Ancestry*, Baltimore, 2004
- Gary Boyd Roberts: *Royal Descents of 600 Immigrants*, Baltimore, 2004
- Douglas Richardson: *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Baltimore, 2005
- Michael Corbishley et. al: *The History of Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University, 2006
- World Book Millenium 2000 Deluxe Edition*, © 1999 World Book Inc., © IBM Corp.