

4. Dafydd Nanmor

Dafydd Nanmor spent most of his life under the patronage of the Tywyn household on the Teifi estuary. He seems to have adopted south Ceredigion as a sanctuary because of problems caused by poems he had written for a married woman, Gwen o'r Ddol, in his native Snowdonia (PWDN, xviii, xix).

Of 38 poems collected by Thomas Roberts and edited by Ifor Williams in 1923 (PWDN)¹⁸, ten were written for the family of Rhys ap Iaredudd in Tywyn. Dafydd Nanmor was writing at a similar time to Deio ap Ieuan Du as they both have poems to the same three generations of the household (See ch.3 above).

Williams' investigations suggested dates for Dafydd Nanmor's life as spanning the period from 1420-1485 (PWDN xxix-xxxiv). The Gutor'r Glyn online repository (GG.net) notes that: "It may be safer to assume that Dafydd died sometime between 1485 and 1490, assuming that he died about the same time as Ieuan Deulwyn (*fl. c.1460–88*)".¹⁹ This is mainly on the basis of the *marwnad* of Hywel Rheinallt to four poets who must have died at a similar time: Ieuan Deulwyn, Dafydd Nanmor, Deio ap Ieuan Du and Tudur Penllyn.

Lladd penn Gwynedd wenn yn ddau

Yw lladd awen holl Ddeau.

Marrw Dafydd Nanmor dyfiad,

Marrw cerdd Cymraeg a'i had.

(PWDN XL:1-4, Hywel Rheinallt)

Dafydd Nanmor's output can be separated into four parts: The early love poems; the works for the Tywyn family; the material associated with the Tudor and Lancastrian cause; finally, various religious and demonstration pieces (*gorchestion*) and poems to other patrons.

Poems for the Tywyn Household

Living comfortably - Praises to Rys ap Meredith (PWDN I, II & III)

From the evidence of his work, Dafydd Nanmor's life in Tywyn was very good:

Rhys orau'n hir Is Aeron

Ar i fwrdd o Ddofr i Fon.

Gorau perchen (a'r wen wiw)

Ty of Adda hyd heddiw.

(PWDN I:1-4)

We are told that Rhys was not only the best in Is-Aeron (I:1), his table was the best from Dover to Ynys Môn and from the time of Adam to today... This opening to the *cywydd* is very much in Dafydd Nanmor's style, he starts with a pithy line that sets the tone for the poem. In this case he tells of the roast, white bread (*can*), different wines on his table; ending with a call to the hosts on the Mount of Olives to witness food Rhys has given. Ending too, as he started, with a memorable one line cameo of Rhys' munificence.

Pan fo'r trillu'n dygunaw

Ar drym fawr Olifer draw,

I telir, er nas talwyd,

I Rys, faint a roes o fwyd

(PWDN I:51-54)

In the next poem Dafydd Nanmor shows off his skill using *cyrch cymeriad*²⁰ for the first seven englynion. He starts by simply indicating that, to the houses of Rhys (ap Maredudd) the throngs may come in from the night certain of being without want for ever :

Genau'r Glyn, Towyn, finteioedd - a droes

I dai Rys yn lluoedd.

Ni ddel i'r nefaddau oedd

Nos eisiau yn oes oessoedd.

(PWDN II:1-4)

Again there is a simple start that introduces the theme of Rhys' hospitality. Later he speaks of great vineyards across hill and vale, across the south seas (*Môr y Deau*), eighteen ships full of casks:

Ef a bryn y llyn a'r gwinllanau - mawr

Ar draws Môr y Deau,

Deunowllwyth ac wyth heb gau,

Deunowllong o dunellau .

(PWDN II:17-20)

The *awdl* continues in vivid flow changing to *gwadodyn byr*²¹, all rhyming on the word that starts and ends the poem ‘Glyn’. This change of pace includes a rush of hyperbole; ‘thousands do his bidding, two thousand make poetry (PWDN II:31), a thousand to get the honey of bees. Ending with “stars, nor bird nor sun, nor moon, nor salt water or fresh, or vast coastal sky did not circle until it went to praise the strand of Glyn” PWDN II:57-60. This comparison of the poets circuit around their patron’s land, to the ambit of the sun and stars might seem to invest hubris in both the nobleman and poet. Some, such as Sion Cent (c.1400-1430) said as much:

A false, bad bold criterion,

A fool’s path Welshmen go on.

Why that old man’s lovely word

And shaping of a chief bard?

Two kinds of inspiration

In the world’s bright path are known.

One to the true way will bring

You, is of Christ’s inspiring,

Full of grace, given always

To prophets, masters of praise,

Holy angels of Hebron -

There was faultless verse begun.

The other inspires an outcry,

Many trusting its foul lie,

This muse of impudent wits

The false pomp of Welsh poets.

(Extract from: The lying Muse To Rhys Goch Eryi, translated by Tony Conran (1986,194-5))

But, there is skill, tradition and a sense of fun in this kind of praising too, which must have given much amusement to the subject and the broader audience. It is what the poets did to earn the patronage of nobles like the family of Tywyn.

In the two poems above are Dafydd Nanmor’s portrayal of the rich life of this nobleman’s household in South Ceredigion. While much embellished, other facets of noble living on the shores of the Teifi can be seen: the shipping of wine and other goods from afar, dealings with London, Ireland, France, and beyond; a strong network of local friends and families, entertainment of poets from all around, celebrations at suitable times such as *Calanmai*²² (PWDN II:35). From just these two examples Dafydd Nanmor’s preoccupation with the good life is obvious. It is also evident the special place Rhys ap Maredudd’s family have in supporting his lifestyle.

The third of the 5 works addressed to Rhys adds a sense of power and personality to his riches and generosity, comparing him to Roman emperors, and the early king Merfyn *Frych* (PWDN III:14-16). Dafydd describes Rhys as strong resisting attack, PWDN (III:21-24) but kind to those in need, firm with those who cross him. (PWDN III:25-36). Finishing like the previous *mawl* with the powerful device of *cymeriad* on the negative:

Ni bu un iustys, na neb yn ystod,

Ny budd dragywydd mewn dur gawod.

Ny bwy na fynnwy dy fod - yn ddiwarth,

Ny bo Dehaubarth, na'r byd hebod.

(PWDN III:61-64)

The poet sings of the extent of Rhy's justice, how he showers his enemies with steel, his influence goes beyond the reach of Deheubarth.

Cywydd Dadolwch to Rhys ap Maredudd (PWDN IV)

Given Dafydd's knowledge of his patron it is not surprising he is so contrite when a transgression appears to threaten the support of Rhys ap Maredudd and family. Dafydd's *cywydd dadolwch* (PWDN IV) starts by outlining his dependence on the Tywyn household now that his homeland of Gwynedd is closed and thorny to him (IV:1-4). He says that the loss of Rhy's support would mean other patrons would shun him too. He would have to live as an outlaw (*herw*) in *Coed Berwyn*. He also appeals to Margaret wife of Rhys using the device of name reflection between *Non* mother of St David and the family name *Einon*:

Dwy a gair un air a Non, -

Dwynwen, a Marged Einon.

Hyd ir aeth drow draethell

Wybyr a gwynt, ni bu wraig well.

Gwnaed gyngor y wraig orau

Yn i hoes, na'i hŷn na'i hau.

(PWDN IV: 45-50)

On the evidence of further service Dafydd Nanmor gave to the family, his appeal to Rhys and his wife must have been successful.

Death - Marwnadau (PWDN VII & IX)

There are two *marwnadau* in the collection of Roberts and Williams (PWDN VII & IX), to Rhys ap Maredudd and Tomas ap Rhys ap Maredudd respectively.

Dafydd Nanmor starts his *marwnad* to Rhys in familiar bardic style; with himself! Rhys' end is his end too... and 'woe to me because I was so dear to him' (VII:7). He also talks about the loss of patronage felt by other poets too; they will be without claret and other good drinks:

Ni bu glerwyr yno heb glared,

Ni buom nifer na baem yn yfed.

Ni bu drai ossai neu ddowssed - na chel,

Ni bu nos uchel ar neb yn syched.

(PWDN VII: 9-12)

Using the complex metre *gwawdodyn byr*²³, the *marwnad* develops with *cymeriad* on most lines, each stanza focusing both on the loss of his friend, the grief of his family, the place of Rhys, now in heaven. The poem ends dramatically with four stanzas using *cymeriad gair* on the word 'Gwae'... Woe to the land, from Môn and Caernarfon, woe to you across the land from Dyfi to Dyfed, woe to us God in heaven for the hard end, (49-68). One can imagine this being recited in the hall of the grieving family with friends and other poets a few weeks or months after the death. It would have been emotive, powerful and hopefully a cathartic memorial.

In the *marwnad* to Thomas (PWDN IX), the lord of Twywn after Rhys died, Dafydd consoles his wife Angharhad (IX:14-16) and two daughters Elliw and Mallt (IX:27-8). Because Thomas' only son pre-deceased him, lordship of the family was inherited by Rhydderch ap Rhys, Thomas' brother. He is not mentioned in the poem nor are there any works ascribed to Dafydd Nanmor with Rydderch's patronage²⁴.

The *marwnad* to Thomas uses the englyn form *unodl union* for the first nine stanzas, with the remaining twenty couplets using the *toddaid hir*.²⁵

Aml wylaw mal glaw ar glawr - y Deau.

Aml llif o dremau, aml llef dramawr.

Aml i mae oer wae am wawr - anneirif,

Aml drem a wnâi'r llif, aml dŵr mewn llawr.

(PWDN IX: 57-60)

The approach Dafydd Nanmor takes is to dwell on the feats of leadership in Thomas' life and contrast this with the loss his absence will now cause. He also reminds the family and friends of the losses they have endured of other members, five

together in the same grave:

Mredydd, Tomas, Rhys, gymerodoedd - teml,

Tomas a'i etifedd;

Mewn un gaer maen' yn gorwedd.

Mae yno bump mewn un bedd.

Gwae Farged weled dialedd - i blwyf!

Gwae i blant o'i orwedd!

Gwae Elliw bod i ddiwedd!

A gwae Vallt o gau i fedd!

(PWDN IX: 21-28)

Education and the 'Great Chain of Being' (PWDN X)

The cywydd to Tomas, Rhys' grandson is particularly moving (PWDN X). It encourages the young man to be confident of his rightful place as the heir in a noble family.

Rys wyd flodeuynn rros haf,

Wyr Rys, nid o'r ryw issaf.

Tyfu'r wyd fal twf yr onn

O fagad penndefigionn.

(PWDN X: 1-2,7-8)

Rhys rose of the summer moor,
Rhys' grandson, no mean nature.
Growing you are like ash trees,
From a cluster of princes.
Tony Conran, p.206

Saunders Lewis (1947, p.158) made much of this piece calling it 'one of the supreme educational poems.' He points to Dafydd Nanmor's use of the medieval ideas of a universal hierarchical order characterised as the 'Great Chain of Being' by the American philosopher Arthur Lovejoy (1936). This sense of inherited authority and encouragement is conveyed in Conran's translation (p.206-7):

Aed bric a blodeu i brenn,

Aed eryr i fric derwenn

Ar fric y benndefigaeth

Yr wyd, Rys, val môr ar draeth.

Doeth yt wrdaaeth atad,

Flower and shoot crown the tree,
Eagle's foot crowns the oaktree.
But you as upon the shore,
The sea, Rhys, crown all honour,
Lordship came upon you there,
You'll thrive now like your father.
May you have, as the beard greys,
A lifetime as long as Moses!

Yt y daw ffynniant dy dad

Yt, Rys, fal y llwyto'r ên,

Y dêl mis a hoydl Moysen.

(PWDN X:57-64)

Intercession and Praise - To St Pedrog for Driving the Sand from Tywyn (PWDN VI)

It is not surprising these works show such a strong connection with sea, with the home of Rhys and family being so close to the Teifi estuary. This closeness is vividly portrayed when the sand is blown in by a gale covering some Tywyn land and three homesteads. Dafydd Nanmor prays in a *cywydd* to St Pedrog²⁶ to have that sand blown away as the world was washed by the biblical flood:

Glaw diliw am saith briwyd,

Golchi y bu gylch y byd.

Gynt i gyrrodd gwynt goror

Ludw mân i waelod y môr.

Os rhif y pedwar prifwynt

A wnaeth y gwellt yn noeth gynt,

Gwnaed Pedroc fawrweirthioc wyn

Yrru'r twod o'r Tywyn.

(MWPSS, p.112 lines:49-50,53-58)

Flood rain on account of seven deadly sins.

Once washed all the circuit of the world.

Then the wind blew from the coast

Blew all the fine ash to the bottom of the sea.

If all the four chief winds together

Once made the grass bare,

Let blessed Pedrog, great his worth,

Drive the sand from Y Tywyn.

Ibid, p.383.

It is interesting that Dafydd designs the poem to praise both Rhys ap Maredudd and St Pedrog. St Pedrog is reminded by the poet that Rhys rebuilt his church in Ferwig 800 years after his remains were interred there, and established it like the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury (MWPSS p.112:15-26). The poet implies, it would be beneficial if Pedrog could return the favour and avoid Rhys having to use men and horses to carry the sand from the land! It is not recorded how the poet's intercession was answered.

Other Patrons in the Area

While Dafydd seems to have had particular support from the family at Tywyn he also served other patrons in the area:

Dafydd ap Tomas ap Dafydd a man of authority in Aberteifi (PWDN XXII)

Ifor Williams in his notes on this awdl says of the patron: “He is of Brycheiniog (XXII:1); a constable (29); in authority in Cardigan Castle (8,9); a terror to both banks of the Teifi (85-86); holding a Castle for Edward IV, (27,49); therefore a Yorkist; is descended from Cradog (66); Tewdor (30), of the Tŵr family (31), of the royal stock of Brecon (31-2), pursues his enemies as far as Llangadog (Carmarthenshire) (53)... He accompanied the Yorkist armies under Herbert in their attack on North Wales in 1468.”²⁷ Since Dafydd Nanmor was more inclined towards the Lancastrian side in the conflict between the roses, it is notable here that he writes for a Yorkist;²⁸ for *beirdd* and *uchelwyr* alike, when it came to one's livelihood the practice of *realpolitik* was an important consideration.²⁹ This poem is also demonstration piece of Dafydd Nanmor's skill; he manages to include in it all 24 metres used by the poets of the time (PWDN,175-6).

Rhys ap Llywelyn ap Cadwgan of Llandygwydd (PWDN XI & XII)

Rys o'r Felynys flaenawr - y Sirwern

Tresorrer pob cerddawr.

Ond tra fai [ef], mewn tre fawr,

Ni mynwn 'y myw unawr.

Bob awr i'r llys fawr ar faeth - i daw'r byd

O bedair ymerodraeth

Llys i dduwc, pob lle sydd waeth,

Llan Dygwy well no dugiaeth.

(PWDN XI: 1-8)

The first twenty lines of this praise poem to Rhys ap Llywelyn are *englynion unodl union* followed by fourteen couplets of *toddaid hir* rhyming on Rys. Rhys is styled as a leader of the ancient isle of Britain of the cantref of Sirwen (XI:1). He is treasurer to each singer (2), his home in Llandygwy is better than a dukedom (7,8)³⁰.

The *toddeidiau* portray Rhys as a religious man (21-27), generous... *cair llawer anrec gar llaw'r un Rhys* (28). Through the poet he is associated with Germany, Brittany and the land of Brutus (Trojan & Britain), the land of Guyenne (region in southern France) and the Dukedom of Guise in northern France (41-42). The poems ends by invoking the protection of the holy Mary (*Fair dd-wair* 59).

In the second poem, a *cywydd*, simply framed, starting with a picture of the patron Rhys as a nobleman with a great laugh, Rhys of the isle (of Britain), with a share of much gold like leaves of May. (XII:1,3-4). In line 5 Rhys is described as '*nessa i Hari*'. Williams wonders in the notes (PWDN,146) if this implies holding some post under Henry VI, dating the poem to before 1461. The work describes the special place Rhys and his ancestor's home holds in the commote of Sirwen and his generosity with food and drink (9-20). And then with *cymeriad* on the negative 'ni' he starts to say what there won't be in his house: 'No days without fair smiles..., Not misery, by Christ.. Not anger or grief... (21-30).

In the following section Dafydd Nanmor dwells on Rhys' talent with words and argument, likening him to *Gwalchmai*³¹ with the tongue of Solomon son of David:

Dan i ddaint eriod ni ddoeth

Ar i ene air anoeth,

Mwy no ffebai, Gwalchmai gwŷdd,

Dafod Sele ap Dafydd.

Y fo a rydd o gyfrwyddyd

Ar y bar i wŷr y byd.

I roi barn, dihareb yw.

Ar ddadl, cyfarwydd ydyw.

Drwy synwyr i gŵyr i gyd

Feddwl y saith gylfyddyd.

(PWDN XI: 33-42)

Rhys gives judgement on evil with learned argument, through wisdom to each man with knowledge of the seven arts³². The language points to the qualities a landowner with authority should exhibit, and affirms Rhys' possession of these talents, while also being a generous and welcoming patron of the arts. The poem concludes with a section assuring the listener of Rhys' love of God, the Church and its priest... (43,44) There is not a better man in the world (58), Rhys is the best Rhys of all (60).

The dissertation's focus is on the poetry of Southern Ceredigion, The poems above represent most that are known to have been written for people of the area and about the area. Dafydd Nanmor's attention was broader. His love poetry probably dates from his time in the North. He has works written for people in other parts of the County and beyond. In addition, there are religious poems and quirky material that demonstrates his poetic virtuosity, his 'feats' - *gorchestion*...

Gwag, gog giw gwaegog gaf goegwig - gwywgog

Gigo gyw gago gwayw gwigig . (PWDN p.120)

Dafydd Nanmor a man of politics

Of particular interest is the poetry written to support the Lancastrian cause, probably composed while at Tywyn and on journeys around Ceredigion. At a time when loyalties in Wales and England were divided, Dafydd Nanmor chose to support the Tudors:

Y ddeuwr arglwyddiaidd,

O Droya a Groeg, da yw'r gwraidd,

O dalaith, hyd i delon,

Rhodri Mawr, ymerodur Môn;

Iarll Rismwnd, Edmwnd, o iaith

Gydwalader, ag o'i dalaith.

Imp îr o frenin Paris,

A dail aur, o fflowrdilys.

Siasbar yw darbar y dawns,

Nai Siarllys o ddinas Orlawns.

(PWDN XIII:1-10)

The two lords Edmund and Jasper the sons of Owain Tudor and Katherine of France, wife of Henry V and mother of Henry VI are fêted by Dafydd here for their ancestry through Rhodri Mawr and Cadwaladr in Wales, through the king in Paris. Edmund is called the most skilful champion of his language. With golden leaves and fleur de lys, Jasper, nephew of Charles, is made ready for the dance in Orleans.

With rabble-rousing repetition, using alliteration in *englynion* and *rhupunt hir* Dafydd Nanmor encourages Jasper to conquer the castles of Britain (PWDN XIV). In the *marwnad* to Edmund 1456 (PWDN XV) Dafydd keeps faith with the Tudor cause:

Ir dwyn i ddayar i daid

Y brawd hyna o'r Brytaniaid,

Duw Tri, hyd ato yr af,

A ro i Owein yr ieuaf. (XV:55-58)

There are two poems (XVI, XVII) to 'Harri Tudor, Iarll Richmwnt' written before the battle of Bosworth and his triumph as Henry VII. In the second, Dafydd prophesies Henry's progress towards his royal future as King and even emperor:

Yn ddug y'w weled, newydd goler,

Oni dewisser yn dywyssog,

Ag yn frenin, gorllewin llywiawdr,

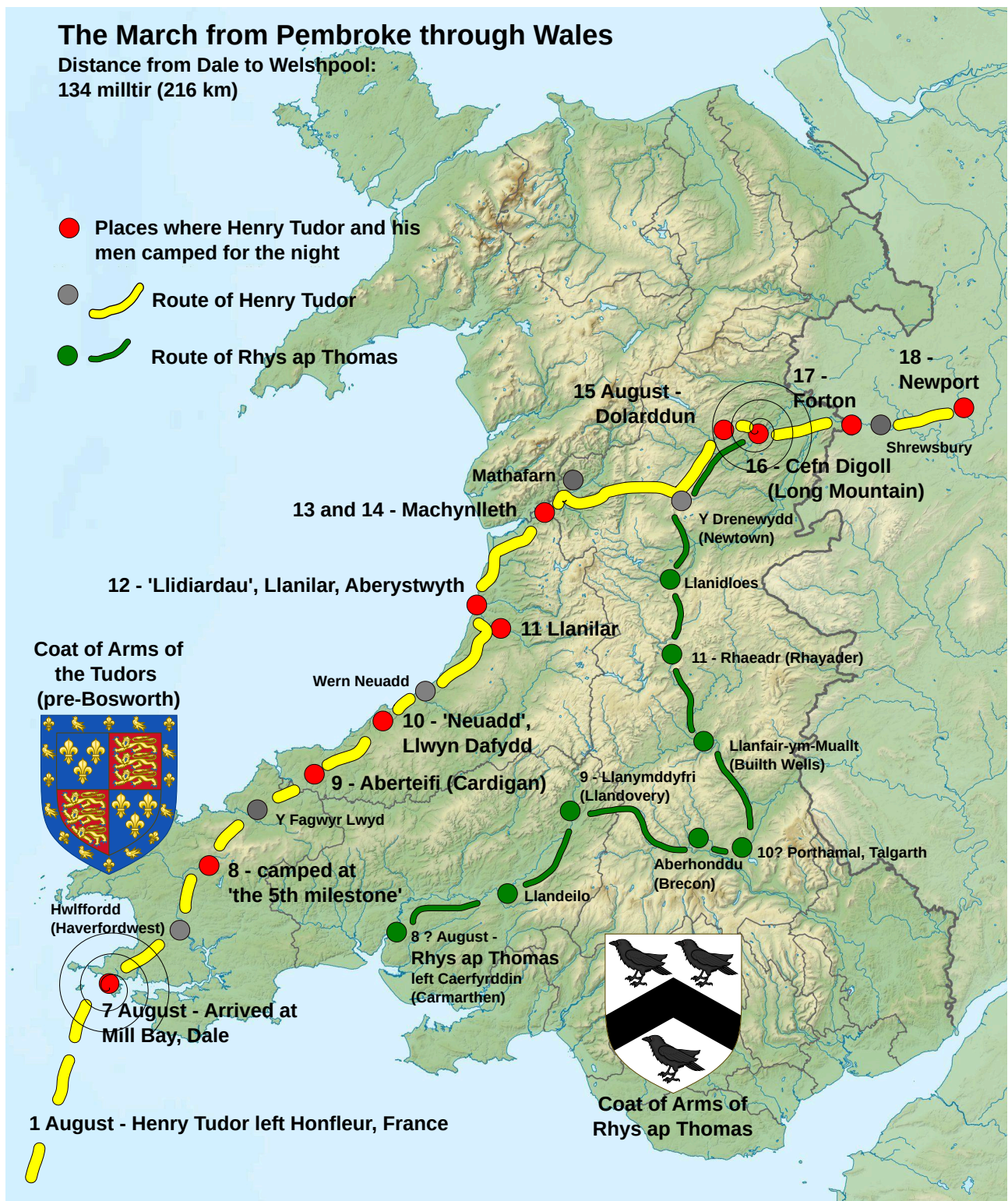
Ag yn emerawdr y gwna Mwrog.

(PWDN XVII:74-75)

3. Dafydd Nanmor Darogan

These *cwyddau darogan* have a long tradition with bards accepted as having an ability to ‘see’ hidden things on behalf of the people.³³ There are other poets of the period such as Lewys Glyn Cothi and Ieuan Deulwyn composing works that reflect their support and that of their patrons to the Tudors (Johnston, 2014, 356).

The period of mid to late fifteenth century, following the crushing of the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr, the imposition of penal laws and the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses, was when Dafydd Nanmor was in his prime. It was another time when Welsh identity and welfare seemed threatened from England; a time when the Welsh lords and landowners jostled for power and advantage. The *uchelwyr* took sides in the English power struggle to gain advantage for themselves and often also to secure support from powerful people with interests in Wales.³⁴ Out of this melange came the prophetic calls from the poets for a greater land, *Prydain* ruled by a Welsh king. The red dragon would prevail over the white and the prophecies of old would be fulfilled.



Henry Tudor and Rhys ap Thomas' march through Wales to Bosworth, showing stopovers in Aberteifi and Llwyndafydd

The Journey of Henry Tudor through Wales³⁵ above illustrates stopovers in Aberteifi and Llwyndafydd. It is not too fanciful to suggest that the uchelwyr and their poets contributed to the sense of support, loyalty and hope that assisted the collection of men for Henry's army along the way.

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Footnotes

¹⁸ There is currently only one collection of Dafydd Nanmor's poetry available in an old 1923 edition published by Ifor Williams on behalf of his M.A student Thomas Roberts who died during the First World War. This dissertation has to rely heavily on Williams' and Roberts' work. There are a few other individual poems available in more recently published articles, and collections (see references at the end of this section). There is a need for a new edition of Nanmor's works reflecting later research into the source manuscripts.

¹⁹ <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/name-full/?n=bd02#> accessed Nov 8th 2016.

²⁰ See [Glossary](#).

²¹ Two lines of nine syllables followed by a *toddaid hir* (PWDN, 125). A *toddaid hir* is a type of 'cyhydedd hir', with the syllable preceding the 'gair cyrch' in the first line maintaining the end-rhyme, and the 'gair cyrch' rhyming with the word preceding the break in the second line. (GPC).

²² May day, May 1st,

²³ See [Glossary](#).

²⁴ There are works by other poets for Rhydderch: [Deio ap Ieuan Du](#); [Lewys Glyn Cothi](#); and two by [Rhys Nanmor](#).

²⁵ See previous footnote - a couplet form, usually gathered into four line stanzas in modern rendering.

²⁶ *Medieval Welsh Poems to Saints and Shrines* (2015), Notes to Poem, pp. 273-4. - MWPSS. (PWDN VI.)

²⁷ Ifor Williams' extensive notes for this poem in PWDN 173-8 focused on assisting future researchers look further into the identity of the person Dafydd Nanmor was writing about.

²⁸ Dafydd did the same for another supporter of Edward IV, the constable of Aberystwyth, William Fychan (PWDN XX).

²⁹ Helen Fulton (2013) gives a useful account of the political nuances associated with a poet in Wales during the period of the Wars of the Roses. In this case the focus is on Guto'r Glyn, but the general points could apply to others with a more Lancastrian perspective such as Lewys Glyn Cothi and Dafydd Nanmor.

³⁰ Llandygwydd today is about 6 miles southeast of Ferwig, just four miles or so from Cardigan.

³¹ Gwalchmai son of Gwair sister of Arthur, “one of the three golden tongued knights of the court of Arthur...”

³² As Williams notes (PWDN, 147), The scholastic system of the middle ages included learning in seven disciplines : Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy.

³³ See *Chapter 12 - Pffoffwydoliaeth a Phropaganda* in Dafydd Johnston (2014), p346-374.

³⁴ Various studies of the complex shifts of allegiance and the associated works of the poets are available, see particularly : Gruffydd Aled Williams (1986) and Rhidian Griffiths (2013).

³⁵ Map of Journey of Henry Tudor through Wales under Creative Commons License:
: https://cy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delwedd:Y_daith_drwy_Gymru_i_Fosworth_March_through_Wales_to_Bosworth_using_Wales_relief_location_map_3.svg
Accessed November 20th 2016.