

8. Gruffudd Llwyd

Gruffudd Llwyd was a poet from Powys who was in his prime in tumultuous times when the fourteenth turned into the fifteenth century. He was a remarkable poet of whom very little is known except that which can be gleaned from his work. He wrote for Owain Glyndŵr (GGLl 11, 12) and for Owain's father-in-law Sir Dafydd Hanmer (GGLl 10). It is a poem to Sir Dafydd that draws Gruffudd into the scope of this study. The poem relates to a crime committed on the road between Carmarthen and Cardigan and Gruffudd Llwyd's wish for Sir Dafydd to act as judge in the case. Gruffudd also wants himself and eleven other poets, several from Ceredigion, to act as the Jury.

Sir Dafydd Hanmer became a senior lawyer for King Edward III and on the accession of Richard II was appointed a judge of the Kings Bench on February 26th 1383 (Foss, iv, p.57). He died in 1387 (J.E Lloyd, 1918,p142). It was in his capacity as judge that Gruffudd Llwyd addresses Sir Dafydd. The poem is asking him to come and listen to the plea of Morgan ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn of Rhydodyn, step-brother of Dafydd ap Gwilym (GGLl, p.244).

The Case of Morgan ap Dafydd

Morgan was the custodian of the estates of Syr Rhys ap Gruffudd in Manordeilo,⁷³ Carmarthenshire (1381-1382), he is also listed as one of the escheators⁷⁴ of Carmarthenshire in the years 1377-80 (GGLl p.240). Morgan was accused of playing a part in the murder of deputy justice John Lawrence on 5th October 1385 while the justice was travelling on the way between Carmarthen and Cardigan. It is in this case that Gruffudd Llwyd uses his poem to call upon Sir Dafydd to judge:

Syr Dafydd, oherdrydd hawl,

Saer y gyfraith fesurawl,

Helm eurdo, heiliau Mordaf

Henw mawr ynn wyd, Hanner naf.

Eirian berffaith gyfreithiwr,

Ail Dafydd Broffwyd wyd, wr;

Pell glod i't dafod a dyf

Pell y seliaist, pwyll Selyf.

Dyred i Gaer, drwy dy gof,

Fowrddawn wr, Fyrddin erof

I gynnal dros gwynawl drin

Risiart farwnwart Frenin.

(GGLl, 10.1-12)

The first line is a sign of Gruffudd's skill; *o hedrydd (from home) hawl* (come, request, plea, trial)⁷⁵ combining a simple request to Sir Dafydd to 'come from home' using words that have legal overtones, thus indicating the overall subject of the *cywydd*. The poem continues in the classic pattern of request by first praising the subject. Sir Dafydd's skill as a lawyer, his wisdom and generosity are all invoked in these opening lines. He is likened to Mordaf (10.3), one of the three most generous ones (GGLl, p.243; TYP4 451), a bright, perfect lawyer (10.5), a second prophet David (10.6), with Solomon's wisdom (10.8), a man of great talent like Merlin (10.10).

The final part of this section makes the request for Sir Dafydd to come to Carmarthen (10.9), and hold over a legal complaint of treatment of Richard,⁷⁶ defender of the King

(10.11-12). Gruffudd is perhaps echoing or reinforcing what has already happened; a King's man has been attacked, this is a case that needs a suitable lawyer of authority to adjudicate. What comes next is what sounds like a statement supporting Morgan's innocence:

Pan welych, anwylwych naf,

Holi gŵr hael a garaf,

Mil gyda mi a'i diaur,

Morgan ynn a ran yr aur;

Pâr i hwn mewn cystlwn cant

Cost lwyswych, cwest dilyasant.

(GGLl, 10.13-18)

'When you see dear, excellent lord and question the generous gentleman that I love (13-14), a thousand with me and his exoneration (15), Morgan ... is making an acceptable plea (16-18).'

The Jury of Poets

Gruffudd follows this with a remarkable introduction of twelve men who he suggests stand as a jury, each one a poet. The poets are named in turn and given a couplet or two of laudatory description, so that by the end of the poem Gruffudd has assembled an impressive crowd of bards, including himself, to listen and weigh the evidence in this case. Some of these individuals are only known through this text, and others are familiar from their poetry or other references. The poem helps dates the poets to between 1385 and 1387,⁷⁷ as it seems reasonable to assume they are all contemporary with Gruffudd Llwyd, Sir Dafydd Hanmer, Morgan ap Dafydd and the events associated with this case.

Gruffudd ap Rhys, gair Raphael,

Gwynionydd, hoyw brydydd hael,

Gwr er aur, nid garw ei ron,

Yn awdl ni thwng anudon;

Llywelyn, roddlyn ruddloyw,

Berchen gwych awen, Goch hoyw;

Nid anos cael, hael hoywlys,

Barn gywir o rhifir Rhys,

Un o'r rhai gorau iueainc

Y dyry farn, aed i'r fainc;

Deddfyw dioddef Owain

Ap Dafydd, saer cywydd cain,

Gŵr a gan organ irgoed,

Gwyliadus gerdd, gwlad Is Coed;

(GGLl, 10.25-34,39-42)

The first poet introduced is Gruffudd ap Rhys of the commote of Gwynionydd in southern Ceredigion (10.25-28).⁷⁸ Gruffudd ap Rhys is described as having the word of Raphael, the angel (25); lively, generous a man of gold (26), not rough in *awdl*, nor a perjuror (28). There is one englyn of this poet's work in the Hendregadredd manuscript, believed to be in the hand of a scribe from the end of the 14th or the start of the 15th Century:

Ceisiaw diureiniaw duw frenin - pabyl,

A wnaeth pobyl gyfriscin,

[]divreiniawd duw frenin

Y tylwyd ar lwyd ar llin.

(GGLl p.245 n.10.25-6)

The next poet in Gruffudd's jury list is Llywelyn Goch. T. Roberts and Dafydd Johnston suggest this is Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, (GGLl, p.245 n.20-30). Llywelyn is introduced in a single couplet as being gifted with humour and light, possessing great poetic inspiration (GGLl 10.29-30).

After two more bards, both named Rhys and praised in a similar manner,⁷⁹ Gruffudd recommends Owain ap Dafydd from Is Coed. Law is proclaimed as Owain's purpose (39), he is a creator of a *cywydd* fair (40), a gentleman who plays the pipes (41), who writes carefully (42). Sadly, nothing more is known about Owain apart from where he was from and this praise from his contemporary Gruffudd.

Gruffudd continues with six more: Moel y Pantri, Cain, Y Melyn, Y Cyw, Y Crach, Y Poesned and then elects himself as the twelfth man to the jury:

Rhamant ydyw'r moliant mau,

Rhifer pan fynner finnau,

Ni'm rhoes Duw nef, dangnef dôn,

Yn oed i dyngu anudon.

(GGLl, 10.61-64)

Having praised all these colleagues Gruffudd here moves with a little irony to describe his work: 'Excellent (*rhamant* - romantic) is the praise of mine (61)'. Rhys Goch Eryri in his

marwnad (IGE2 LIII p.157-9) eulogises Gruffudd as a love poet.⁸⁰ He says that the married men of the neighbourhood would be pleased by his burial (IGE2 p.158 line 13-16)! There is much more to Gruffudd's poetry than the subject of love, as can be seen in this poem, but this line shows Gruffudd keeping to the pattern he created for this *cywydd*, praising every poet on his jury, even himself, yet being humorously self referential with his romantic reputation. The following lines acknowledge his own human frailty, in the face of God, and continue with the language of law suitable for the subject of the poem: 'I give not God in heaven peace of mind, Or in an age swear a false oath (GGLI,10.63,64 see above)'.

The Verdict

The poem concludes with Gruffudd saying the journey of collecting the 12 for the jury was enjoyable and praying to Mary on his holy relic and to God for the accused, Morgan.

Rhianon Ifans' research (GGLI p.241, 242) shows that Sir Nicholas Audley, First Justice of South Wales was commanded to bring Morgan ap Dafydd into custody. Later when Sir Nicholas Audley lost favour with King Richard, there is mention of the case of the articles against Nicholas Audley:

Morgan ap Dafydd and others combined to plan the death of John Lawrence, Sheriff of the King in Aberteifi and one who was appointed as the King's deputy to hold the small sessions in a place of justice, and that the aforementioned Morgan and others with him, on Thursday before the feast of Saint Denis in the 9th year of the reign of King Richard II (October 5th 1385), on the King's road between Carmarthen and Cardigan killed the aforementioned John Lawrence, officer of the king, in a felony obstructing the law of the King. (GGLI, p.241. Translation from the Latin by Prof. J. Beverley Smith, and interpreted from Welsh by this author).

There was a reply from Sir Nicholas Audley:

In the case of the first article... It is said that he is not guilty on one of the points included in the article.

(GGLI, p.242. Translation from the French by Prof. J. Beverley Smith, and interpreted from the Welsh by this author)

So perhaps Morgan was acquitted? There is a strong sense from the poem that this was Gruffudd's hope. The poem is revealing in other ways too; it reinforces Gruffudd's close relationship with the court of Owain Glyndŵr in the period before the uprising. Gruffudd must have had a good relationship with Owain's father-in-law to be comfortable enough to ask, even in half jest, for him to intervene in this serious case.

Owain Glyndŵr and Beyond

There are two praise poems to Owain Glyndŵr (GGLI 11,12). Gruffudd must have spent some time in the courts of Owain in Sycharth and Glyndyfrdwy. He says to Owain, 'When you were away in Scotland, I nearly died of longing for you' (GGLI 11.15-18).⁸¹ These poems are an example of Gruffudd's fluency with the classic stories of medieval Welsh culture and beyond: Uthr Pendragon (11.36); Owain son of Urien (11.40) one of the leaders in the old north, there is a *marwnad* to Owain attributed to Taliesin, (Williams, 1975, p.12); Urien, King in the old north (11.50); Brân Fendigaid son of Llŷr (12.31) in the story of Branwen in the second branch of the Mabinogi; Arthur (12.34); Otiel, one of the romantic leaders of Charlemagne (12.48 note p.264).

Thomas Roberts (IGE2, xvii) describes Gruffudd Llwyd as one of the most able and important poets of his time. In his cywydd to the brothers of Nannau, Gruffudd says of himself, 'Not one of the worthless *clér* am I, I am not a minstrel that plays at fairs'⁸² (GGLI 14.18,21,22). Llywelyn ab y Moel, one of the poets on Gruffudd's jury, makes the case in another *marwnad*, for a serious side to Gruffudd's poetry by emphasising his

religious works to the Father, to Jesus and the Holy Spirit and to Mary (GSCyf, 14.29-32). Two such poems survive, one to the Trinity (GGLl 19) and one to God (GGLl 18).

Two other works are witness to the diversity of the work of Gruffudd Llwyd, his *moliant* to the beard of Owain ap Maredudd (GGLl 16) and his praise poem to the sun and Glamorgan (GGLl 9). This is a poet who lived through the uprising of Owain Glyndŵr, was clearly a friend to this revolutionary court, yet there is no record from him of the events during or after the tumult. He is clearly a master of the *cywydd* as tool of love, praise and eulogy in death and yet steps beyond these to other subjects. His request poem to Sir Dafydd Hanmer shows him comfortable with the companionship of eleven contemporary poets with whom he shared the circuits of South Wales.

Rhiannon Ifans describes Gruffudd ‘as a man of imaginative thought, absorbing truths and reshaping them for his audience in a sublime way’ (GGLl p.87).⁸³

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Footnotes

⁷³ Small village now on the A40 about 5 miles north-east of Llandeilo in the direction of Llanymddyfri.

⁷⁴ A person who dealt with the taking land back of landowners on behalf of the King or higher feudal landlord or the courts. This would have been an unpopular job as lands were taken and passed onto other lords as favours in the political upheaval of these times. See also: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/escheat> viewed November 20th 2016.

⁷⁵ <http://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html?hawl> accessed November 20th 2016.

⁷⁶ Richard II.

⁷⁷ Sir Dafydd Hanmer died in 1387 (see introduction above).

⁷⁸ Bordered on the south by the River Teifi, and by the commotes of Is Coed to the west Caerwedros to the north and Mabwynion on the east.

⁷⁹ Rhys Goch Eryri a disciple of Gruffudd Llwyd (CGLl 10.31-34; note p.246) and Rhys ap Dafydd Llwyd ab Iowerth, teacher of poet Llywelyn ab y Moel (10.35-38, *ibid*).

⁸⁰ Six of the nineteen poems that have survived are love poems (GGLl p.80).