



Fforest Glyn Cothi Cultural Heritage Project

The Fforest Glyn Cothi Cultural Heritage Project set up by the Brechfa Forest and Llanllwni Mountain Tourism Cluster raises awareness of the traditional lifestyle of forest dwellers and the built and natural heritage sites within Brechfa Forest, Llanllwni Mountain and the communities which encircle them.

You can find information about famous local figures and about spiritual, religious and tourism sites in our literature and on our website:

www.roam-brechfaforest-llanllwnimountain.co.uk

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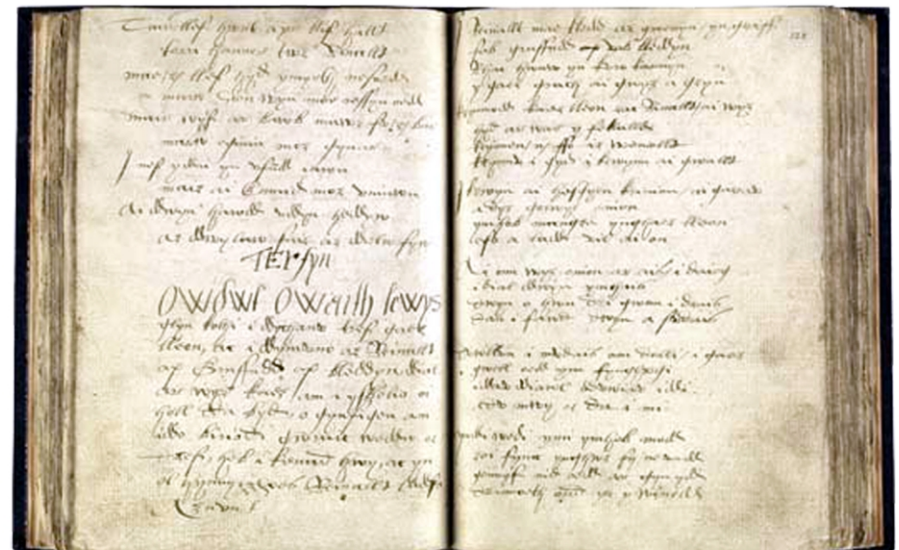


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lewis Glyn Cothi

A prolific writer and orator, Poet Lewis Glyn Cothi is regarded as one of the most influential bards of his time. Challenging the oppressive laws of the day, his poems implored for rights to be restored to Welsh people.

Much speculation surrounds Lewis Glyn Cothi's political activities but none greater than his connection to a wandering monk, who in the year 1442 travelled throughout Wales holding assemblies called cymmorthau.



Lewis Glyn Cothi, 'Satire on the Men of Chester'

Lewis Glyn Cothi (c. 1420 – 1490), also known as Llywelyn y Glyn, was a prominent Welsh poet and one of the most important representatives of the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr ("Poets of the Nobility") or Cywyddwyr ("cywydd-men"), the itinerant professional poets. He was born at Pwllcynbyd farm, near the remote hamlet of Rhydycymerau in the parish of Llanybydder. He took his bardic name from the forest of Glyn Cothi, the ancient name for Brechfa Forest, his birthplace. His given name was Llewelyn, but he generally used the name "Lewis" in his verse. About two hundred and thirty of his poems have been preserved.

The bards were the 'spin doctors' of their day, producing poetry largely at the command of their patrons. However, their work also reflected the mood of the society and they did have close acquaintanceship with some of the chief politicians of the time. One important function of the poets was to advertise prospective political movements, sometimes openly and at other times clandestinely.

Lewis Glyn Cothi was one of the major bards during the War of the Roses. Many of his prophecies of when a Welsh ruler would arise matched events he must have known were planned. From the very beginning of the war, the Tudors made Wales their special sphere of action, capitalising on civil unrest. The rising of Owain Glyndwr meant that for many years the English government maintained a considerable force of archers and men at arms in the most disaffected districts of Wales. A force of about a thousand men was stationed in South West Wales even when England was being drained of its fighting men for the French wars of Henry V. Another of the results of Owain Glyndwr's rising was a code of penal laws. For many generations,

Welshmen could not acquire property, serve on juries, intermarry with the English or hold office under the Crown. No Englishman could be convicted on the oath of a Welshman. Individuals who were powerful enough to be viewed as beneficial in maintaining control of Wales could petition English parliament to be recognised as citizens, but the vast majority of the population suffered.

In one poem, Glyn Cothi implores Owen ap Griffith "to mete out justice to the proud, and restore their ancient customs to the timid", he appeals to another patron to "restore to Wales her own law". Glyn Cothi saw in Edward IV a descendant of Gwladys the Dark, daughter of Llywelyn the Great; and he appeals to him, "a royal Welshman," to rid them of oppression, and ameliorate the condition of the peasant". Similarly, Henry of Richmond who became Henry VII found in Glyn Cothi an enthusiastic supporter not because he represented the claims of Lancaster, but because he was the grandson of Owen Tudor. Owen Tudor, an Anglesey gentleman who traced his descent from the old Welsh king, Cadwaladr, had married the widow of Henry V.

It is believed that Glyn Cothi did not limit his activities to writing poetry. He was obviously present at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross. He likely witnessed the battle himself in the company of Owen ap Gruffudd ap Nicolas, the son of a prominent Carmarthenshire esquire, and subsequently Owen and Lewis spent time as outlaws in Snowdonia. About 1442 an individual travelling through Wales dressed as a monk, holding riotous assemblies called cymmorthau, had been narrating Welsh chronicles and traditions and stirring up the people to rebellion. Circumstantial evidence suggests it was Lewis Glyn Cothi.

