

## Brycheiniog: English Translations of Welsh Articles

### Brycheiniog Volume XLIX (2018): The Twelve Companions of Anlach, Brynach Parry, pages 133-41.

The number twelve occurs a significant number of times in the early myths, legends and histories concerning the foundation of the ancient Kingdom of Brycheiniog. Numbers do, of course, have a magical significance in many of mankind's religions, legends and mythologies, and are frequently used as a rough representation of a total – 2, 40, 100, 300 – rather than as a precise number. The fact that both Welsh and Breton treat the number between 17 and 19 – *deunaw* and *tric'hwec'h* – differently from those on either side suggests that 18 had some magical quality in the minds of our common Brythonic ancestors. As is the case with widespread taboos against mentioning the name of certain animals or objects<sup>1</sup>, both languages avoid using the number that could logically be expected in the series, namely 'tri-ar-bymtheg' or 'eizhtek', preferring to use instead a multiple of other magical numbers – (2x9, 3x6). Apart from the mathematical power and usefulness of the number twelve<sup>2</sup>, it is also an extremely potent example of the importance of numbers in terms of religion and mythology all over the world.

The two documents that relate the story of the establishment of the Kingdom of Brycheiniog, namely *De Situ Brecheniauc*<sup>3</sup> and *Cognatio Brychan*<sup>4</sup>, are considered to be some of the earliest vernacular records in the whole of Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire<sup>5</sup>. Despite the fact that they are written in Latin and that they are late copies (*De Situ* – 13<sup>th</sup> Century and *Cognatio* – 17<sup>th</sup> Century) of much earlier documents, as evidenced by the forms of the Welsh place-names in them, they offer us the 'official' foundation history or mythology of early Brycheiniog. They are, to a certain extent, contradictory in some small details, but the two stories together give us a picture of our remote past.

The first appearance of the number twelve in the accounts of the establishment of early Brycheiniog, mythological or otherwise, is when Marchell, the only daughter of Tewdrig and the heiress to her father's kingdom of Garth Madryn (which encompassed the Usk and Llynfi valleys with its capital in the area of Talgarth) is counselled by her father to flee westward to escape a period of severe cold (*De Situ Brecheniauc*) or an outbreak of plague (*Cognatio Brychan*) which threatened the territory. This disaster is represented by the three bats in the very much later heraldic arms of Brycheiniog – the only instance of the use of bats as a charge on shields in Welsh Heraldry<sup>6</sup>. In addition to the 300 armed men who accompanied her on her epic journey (*De Situ* and *Cognatio*), the presence of 12 handmaidens in the expedition is also specifically mentioned (*Cognatio*).

Marchell set off from Bryn Gwyn, an unknown location in Llanfaes<sup>7</sup>, (although Theophilus Jones<sup>8</sup> insists that this is the name of a field on the Newton Estate) initially for Glansefin<sup>9</sup> near Llandeilo, where a third of her armed escort died overnight from the cold. Thence she proceeded to Meidrim<sup>10</sup>, where the same fate befell a further hundred of her men. According to the legend, the journey continued onwards from Meidrim to Porth Mawr/Whitesands Bay<sup>11</sup> beyond Tŷ Ddewi/Saint Davids', the usual point of embarkation for journeys from southern Wales to Ireland.

Both *Cognatio* and *De Situ* assert that the now depleted party crossed over to Ireland, and this traditional interpretation of the legend has been accepted by subsequent historians and antiquaries over the centuries. However, I would suggest that we have here to do, not with the Emerald Isle itself, but rather with the area of Irish settlement in west Wales, namely the kingdom of Dyfed, covering parts of Pembroke, southern Ceredigion and northwestern Carmarthenshire.

An Irish tribe, the Déisi, which originally meant 'client people' or 'landless vassals', was expelled from the royal seat of Tara as a result of a breakdown of relations with the High King of Ireland, Cormac

mac Airt, at some point in the third century AD. They settled in various districts of central and southern Ireland, eventually colonising the Dungarvan and Waterford area of south east Ireland which still bears their name, and is much in evidence as 'the Decies' in commercial, sporting and cultural titles in the area: the new 'greenway' long distance hiking and cycling trail on the track of the old railway between Dungarvan and Waterford has been given the title 'Rian na nDéisi' – *the Decies' Trail*. A branch of the tribe is believed to have migrated across to Dyfed in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>12</sup> - the progenitor of that branch being recorded in Irish genealogies as Eochaid Allmuir, the epithet meaning 'overseas'.

After the withdrawal of the Romans from Britain, Irish raiding, then settlement, was widespread on the western seaboard of Britain, in Argyll (where an Irish tribe, the Scotti, eventually gave their name to the future Scotland), Cumbria, Anglesey, Gwynedd, Dyfed and Cornwall. The evidence for the migration and the Irish settlement in west Wales is contained in an eighth Century Irish manuscript, the Expulsion of the Déisi<sup>13</sup>, in the presence in west Wales, and, significantly, also in Brycheiniog, of the second largest total, after Ireland, of stones inscribed in the early Irish Ogam script, in the genealogies of the kings of Dyfed and their forebears, preserved on both sides of the Irish Sea, as well as in linguistic evidence in the vocabulary of dialects of west Wales.

Linguistic survivals in dialects of parts of West Wales clearly show Irish influence in words such as *feidr* (*farm track* or *small road* from the Irish *bothar*, *road*), *cnwc* (*cnoc*, *hillock*), *rho* (*ró*, *too*).<sup>14</sup> It has also been suggested that the Breconshire place-name element, *beili*, used for 'farmyard', is also an Irish survival, from *baile*, farmholding or township, but this is disputed, since the word is first recorded<sup>15</sup> in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and thus could as easily be a later borrowing from Norman French.

The Irish kingdom of Dyfed persisted up to the days of our Law Giver, Hywel Dda, who married Elen, the daughter of Hyfaidd, the last Irish king of Dyfed. Hywel inherited the kingdom following the deaths of his wife's two brothers, Llywarch and Rhodri, in 904 and 905<sup>16</sup>. The list of kings of Dyfed would suggest that Irish had largely been abandoned by the late eighth century, if not much earlier, although this does not preclude its continued use for memorial purposes alongside Latin.

In similar vein, I would propose that the hunt of the boar Twrch Trwyth in the tale of Culhwch and Olwen in the Mabinogi<sup>17</sup> likewise starts off, not in Ireland, but rather in Dyfed, in Cwm Cych in the epicentre of the territory of the Dyfed Irish, and ending up, not in Cernyw/Cornwall, but in Coed Cernyw<sup>18</sup> between Cardiff and Newport: this trajectory would avoid any necessity for the boar to swim across the seas from Ireland to Wales, and from Wales to Cornwall<sup>19</sup>, although the story of the boar hunt is considered to have its origin in Ireland<sup>20</sup>.

The distances from Llanfaes to Glansefin, and from Glansefin to Meidrim are very similar, (24/26 miles – 38/41 km) but it is remarkable that the distance onwards from Meidrim to Whitesands Bay (37 miles - 60km) is approximately half as long again. The first two stages of Marchell's journey are credible, but the length of the third stage would have been difficult to complete in one day in the period after the Roman withdrawal and the decay of their road system, and even the evidence for the very existence of Roman Roads in the far western extremes of Demetia is very slim indeed. Applying the distance of the first two stages to the third would place us firmly in the north of modern Pembrokeshire, the heart of the Irish settlement on the coast of West Wales.

If we discount the erroneous interpretation of the Markle Brook in Radnorshire<sup>21</sup>, as being a reference to a male Marcellus<sup>22</sup>, the only place-name associated with Marchell is to be found in this area of Pebidiog, namely Caerfarchell<sup>23</sup>, 4 miles to the east of Tŷ Ddewi/St David's. This is the heartland of Irish territory on the coast of southwest Wales, an area containing numerous Ogam and bilingual inscribed stones, a number of which reflect corresponding personal names in Brycheiniog.

After marrying Anlach, 'king of that country' (*De Situ*), or son of Gornuc, 'King of that place' (*Cognacio*), Marchell gave birth to a boy, Brychan, and in order to secure the child's inheritance as sole grandson of Tewdrig, the family moved back to the Usk valley, accompanied by the 12 Irishmen who had married her 12 handmaidens. Theophilus tells us that the boy was born in the Irish kingdom<sup>24</sup>, but then also claims that the boy was born in Benni<sup>25</sup>, either the Roman Fort at the Gaer, or the village of Fenni Fach<sup>26</sup>, across the Usk from Llansbyddid, where a stone in the churchyard is claimed to mark Anlach's grave. The village of Llanhamlach<sup>27</sup>, 4 miles to the east, may also record his name.

It would seem that Anlach's companions were granted land in the kingdom of Garth Madryn, which was to become Brycheiniog, the Land of Brychan. In the Brycheiniog legends, the name of the High King, Cormac mac Airt, was misinterpreted as 'Coronawg, rex Hiberniae' – the Crowned King of Ireland, who is included in the ancestry of Anlach, Brychan's father.

It is unfortunate that the names of most of these twelve men have faded into obscurity, with mere scraps of the list surviving: *De Situ* records just four names, Kerniol, Fernach, Lithmilich and Lounic, although Theophilus<sup>28</sup> also mentions an Ensermach. (Unfortunately, he adds an intriguing '&', implying that he must have had access to a more extensive list which he does not quote further).

The name Lounic reflects the name LLONNOC on an inscribed stone at Rathduff in Kerry<sup>29</sup>. Lithmilich (Theophilus has Lithlimich) is also recorded in Ireland as LEITMECH. Fernach is Brynach, Brychan's 'periglor', confessor or companion, patron of Llanfrynach in Brycheiniog, and numerous parishes in the Preseli area<sup>30</sup> and of three in Glamorgan. In Welsh, he is given the epithet 'Wyddel' - 'the Irishman', strengthening the case for the movement of Irish from West Wales inland to Brycheiniog, although his name actually means 'British' or 'British born', which would seem to make him a Wales-born Irish cleric, ministering to an Irish Community in Wales. The same document also quotes two 'estates' in Brycheiniog, namely Aberbrynich<sup>31</sup> and Mynydd Brynich<sup>32</sup>, as lands granted to two others of the twelve Irishmen. We must be careful to distinguish between Brynich, the name of two small rivers in Brycheiniog<sup>33</sup>, and Brynach<sup>34</sup>, eponym of Llanfrynach: despite the apparent similarity and proximity to each other, the two have quite different origins and meanings, and are all too frequently confused. Aberbrynich is close to the recently discovered Roman fort or fortlet at Cefn Brynich<sup>35</sup>.

Brycheiniog is the only inland region in Britain with a substantial number of inscribed stones of this early period, amounting to a total of 17<sup>36</sup>. Some seven are inscribed in Ogam, the extraordinarily interesting and important alphabet of the early Irish. This fact clearly testifies to the presence of the Irish in these parts, and would seem to confirm that Irishmen did indeed come to Brycheiniog along with Anlach, Marchell and the young Brychan.

One of the earliest Ogam stones would seem to be the TARICORO<sup>37</sup> stone which stood near Aberhydfder in the upper reaches of the Usk<sup>38</sup>. The name appears to be unique. This is the only known stone where Ogam overlays a Latin inscription, although it is intriguing to note that the name on the original Roman gravestone – TAVRIANVS more than slightly recalls the Ogam name. Most of the others in Brycheiniog are in Latin as well as Ogam, the latest being in Latin alone.

A name that appears twice in Brycheiniog is MACCUTRENI, once in Trecastell, with the qualifier SALICIDVNI<sup>39</sup>, and once on a now lost stone in nearby Crai, with a bilingual or biscriptal inscription commemorating CANNIANI ET PATER ILLIVS MACCVTRENI HIC IACIT<sup>40</sup>. Maccutreni is a fairly common name, found on 4 stone memorials in Wales (two in Brycheiniog, two in Pembrokeshire) and two in Ireland<sup>41</sup>, and although we do not know its meaning, SALICIDVNI is obviously a place-name - Caer Helyg, the Fortress of the Willow. Unfortunately there is no record of that name in

Brycheiniog, the closest being Beili Helyg in Llanfaes, but which is nowhere near either of these stones. It seems probable that the repeated name on the two stones does commemorate the same person, but since the second uses the formula HIC IACET it is meant as a sepulchral monument. This would imply that the Trecastell stone is an estate or boundary marker, rather than a grave marker, unless of course we are dealing with two separate individuals. The Latin using the Christian formula confirms that we are dealing here with a Christian burial, with probable Continental influence<sup>42</sup>.

The same dedication sepulchral formula - CAMAGLI HIC IACIT NIMNI - appears on the (once lost) monoglot Latin stone from Nant Crew<sup>43</sup>, rediscovered in 1947, now in the church of Saint John the Baptist in Cefn Coed y Cymer<sup>44</sup>. It appears that a collection of 5 other stones from this site have been lost. NIMNI, the father of Camagli, spelt slightly differently, appears on the Sgethrog stone - NIMRINI FILIVS VICTORINI<sup>45</sup>. Camagli has been interpreted as 'Cadfael', obviously a Welsh name, as also is the CATACVS - 'Cadog' - commemorated on a stone at Llanfihangel Cwm Du - CATACVS HIC IACIT FILIVS TEGERNACVS<sup>46</sup>. TEGERNACVS also occurs on a stone that stood at Capel y Brithdir, near Rhymini - TEGERNACVS FILI MARTI HIC IACIT<sup>47</sup>.

It has been suggested that there is an inconsistency between the Ogam - DRVGNIATIO - and the Latin - RVGNIATO FILI VENDONI on a stone now in the porch of Defynnog Church<sup>48</sup> but since the stone has been re-cut, and some of the Ogam letters lost, this supposition cannot be confirmed.

An anomaly occurs on a famous stone discovered on a farm near Crughywel – the inscription is to TURPILLI IC IAC PVVERI TRILVNI DVNOCATI<sup>49</sup>, but Charles Thomas<sup>50</sup> suggests the second name should be TRIBVNI. In Ogam, the curious PVVERI, boy, or young servant, is translated as MOSAC, which also appears in a dedication – GOSOCTEAS MOSAC MAKINI - in Ireland<sup>51</sup>. Dunocati is Dingad, the earliest Welsh name of all, recorded as Dinogad in a marginal poem – Pais Dinogad<sup>52</sup> – in a religious manuscript placed in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Dinogad appears as a grandson of Brychan, and is the patron of one of the two Llanymddyfri/Llandovery churches.

A stone at Trallwng<sup>53</sup> bears two interesting names - CVNOCENNI FILIVS CVNOGENI – the same element – CVNO – *dog* – appearing in the names of both father and son. The second element in the son's name is *ceann* – head – and the *geni* in the father's name means *birth, born of...* This is reminiscent of the names of a number of early Brycheiniog saints containing the element 'ci/cŵn/dog' – Cynog, Cynidr. CVNACENA also appears on a stone<sup>54</sup> at Coolmagort, Co Kerry.

A stone at Ystradfellte<sup>55</sup> commemorates a GLUVOCI, a name that also occurs in a different spelling - GLVVOCCI on a stone<sup>56</sup> at Brawdy<sup>57</sup>, Pembrokeshire where it is associated with a certain BRIACI, whose name also appears - NETTASAGRI MAQI MUCOE BRIACI - on a stone at Bridell, Pembrokeshire<sup>58</sup>.

The most enigmatic inscription - M Q D C C - appears on a stone from Cwm Criban, south of the Beacons, but in the parish of Llanddeti, which straddles the mountains from the Usk valley to Cwm Taf as do a number of other parishes in Brycheiniog, testifying perhaps to a larger sphere of influence of the early kingdom than merely the valleys of the Usk and Llynfi, as do traditional sites recording Brycheiniog's operations outside the later extent of the kingdom, as at Troed-y-Rhiw and Pont-y-pŵl, and place-names near Llangadog to the west and Y Fenni/Abergavenny to the east. Since vowels in the Ogam script are the smallest markings, bridging the 'base line' or the angle of the stone, it seems likely that the consonants have survived the wear and tear the vowels were subjected to, and we shall see below a suggestion for their restoration. The area of Brycheiniog south of the Beacons has a total of 9 known inscribed stones.

Although there can be no certainty that a name repeated on different inscribed stones represents the same individual, it is interesting to note that a number of names are found more than once, and in more than one place.

A number of the names mentioned above also appear in inscriptions on stones of this period in other parts of Wales, and also further afield. MACVTRENI<sup>59</sup> and VENDAGNI<sup>60</sup> are commemorated at Breudeth/Brawdy in Pembrokeshire<sup>61</sup>, the latter also appearing in a slightly different form as SOLINI FILIUS VENDONI<sup>62</sup> at Clydai<sup>63</sup>. If Vendagni and Vendoni are one and the same person, we have an insight into at least two generations: Vendagni (Breudeth/Brawdy) is the father of Solini in Clydai, both in Dyfed, and father also to Rugniato/Drugniato in Defynnog, Brycheiniog.

Is the MACUDECETI<sup>64</sup> of Llanychaer, Dyfed the same person as the mysterious M.Q.D.C.D in Cwm Criban in the southern extremes of Brycheiniog south of the Beacons? MACCUTRENI, of Defynnog and Crai, also appears in Cilgerran<sup>65</sup> in Dyfed.

Tegernacvs, of Cwm Du and Capel y Brithdir, also appears as TIGERNACI DOBAGNI<sup>66</sup> at Trefwrddan/Jordanston in Dyfed.

All of these are in north Pembrokeshire or nearby, the heart of the Irish colonisation, and the fact of the presence of the same names in Brycheiniog clearly suggests the movement of individuals or a group from the old Irish Dyfed to Brycheiniog. It also proposes a possible linear relationship between generations. There is obviously no proof that the repeated names refer to the same individuals, but the cultural link is clearly illustrated, and reinforces the evidence of the presence of ogam and other inscribed stones and the testimony of the traditional history of Brycheiniog contained in Cognatio and De Situ.

We do not have a complete record of the names of the twelve men who moved with Anlach to Brycheiniog, but the story is strong on the number in question – twelve. Even though several parishes in Wales quote the number of their patron saints (Llanddeusant (2) x 2, Llantrisant (3) x 2, Llanpumsaint and Pumpsaint (5), Llanynawsant (9), only in Brycheiniog is there any reference to Llanydeuddegant, the 'Church of the Twelve Saints', namely the district of Llangors, the chief church of the Kingdom of Brycheiniog, and twelve saints are also commemorated in the name of the boundary stream between the parishes of Cathedin and Llangors – Ffynnon y Deuddegant. Nowadays, Peulin, or Paulinus, is the patron saint of Llangors church, but it is interesting to note the name of a house, Llanbeulin<sup>67</sup>, about a mile to the north-east of the village. This suggests that the name of this important saint, the patron of Kastelpol/Saint Pol de Leon in Brittany, and father to the two saints of Llanddeudant, has migrated a mile down the road to the church of Llangors after the fading of the memory of the twelve.

Professor Charles Thomas<sup>68</sup> maintained that the records of the church suggest the names of the twelve saints were recited during mass at this church. Since the church at Llangors is only a small distance from the crannog in the lake, considered to be the summer residence of the ruling family of Brycheiniog, and destroyed by Alfred's daughter, Æthelflæd in 916, the place must be considered as central to the history of the area, and the minor kingdom. It would not be remarkable for the names of the founders of the Brychan kingdom to be recited in the course of devotions at the church.

This raises two interesting and significant points. Firstly, the people recorded on the stones must have been of special significance, or aware of their importance, and determined to record this on permanent memorials, at a time when there were few permanent commemorations of individuals. Secondly, the appearance of different generations suggests that these families were of continuing dynastic importance. Several of the stones concerned are sepulchral monuments, especially those

bearing the inscription HIC IACET, or the equivalent; others may be boundary stones, or territorial markers.

At this distance in time, the evidence can only be only partial. Stones have been lost and found again, and we have no idea of the possible total of inscriptions: there have been a number of finds after Macalister's original listing, and others may yet come to light. However, we may conclude that Brycheiniog was founded by the half-Irish Brychan, whose father brought the boy and his mother from the Irish settlement in Dyfed to the back Usk and Llynfi valleys to claim his kingdom, and accompanied by other Irish individuals, traditionally twelve, who were of sufficient importance to have deserved permanent commemoration, either of their graves, or of their territorial land holdings in the form of inscribed stones. We may hope that further inscribed stones from this period will in future come to light and strengthen the evidence available to us.

## Notes

**CIIC** *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (Macalister 1945)  
**CISP** *Celtic Inscribed Stone Project* (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/cisp/database/>  
(darllenwyd 5 Chwefror 2018)

1. Jacot de Boinod 2005.
2. Wells 1986: 84-86
3. *Cotton MS VespA*, yn Wade-Evans and Lloyd 2013: xix, 310-315.
4. *Cotton MS Domitian*, yn Wade-Evans and Lloyd 2013: I, 315-318.
5. Thomas 1994.
6. Siddons 1993, Cyf. 3: 2.
7. SO 035 282.
8. Jones 1804: 40 (notes).
9. SN 732 287
10. SN 289 209
11. SM 730 269
12. Alcock 1970.
13. *Lebor na hUidre/Llyfr y Fwch Goch*, <https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/lebor-na-huidre-book> (darllenwyd 5 Chwefror 2018)
14. Jones and Thorne 1992.
15. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, Vol I: 269.
16. Bartrum 1993.
17. Davies 2007.
18. ST 275 834.
19. *Parri, Brynach*, article in *Newsletter CELIC/Welsh Place-names Society*.
20. Rhys 1901, Cyf. 1.
21. SO 125 -133/393-408
22. Morris 1993.
23. SM 795 270.
24. Jones 1804: 40.
25. Jones 1804: 41.
26. SO 021 289.
27. SO 090 268.
28. Jones 1804: 41.
29. CIIC: 194A.
30. Pontfaen, Nanhyfer/Nevern, Casfuwch, Castell Flaidd, (Penfro), Llanfyrnach a Llanboidy (Sir

- Gâr), Penllain a Llanfrynach (Morgannwg).
31. SO 068 276.
  32. SN 958 229.
  33. Jackson 1953.
  34. Bartrum 1993: 67-68.
  35. SO 075 273.
  36. Thomas 1994: 113.
  37. *CISP*: ABHYD/1.
  38. SN 859 273.
  39. *CIIC*: 341.
  40. *CIIC*: 329.
  41. *CIIC*: 86, Baile Cnoc, Dwyrain Corc 08°04'W 52°02'N Cluan Mór, Rath Bhile,/Rathvilly Ceatharleach 06°69W 52°88N.
  42. Jackson 1953: 159.
  43. *CISP*: NANTC/1, SN 993 165.
  44. Church of Saint John the Baptist, SO 032 080.
  45. *CIIC*: 339.
  46. *CIIC*: 334.
  47. *CIIC*: 404.
  48. *CIIC*: 328.
  49. *CIIC*: 327.
  50. Thomas 1994: 124.
  51. *CIIC*: 216, 52°4 N 9°42W.
  52. Parry 1962: 7/8.
  53. *CIIC*: 342.
  54. *CIIC*: 119.
  55. *CIIC*: 345.
  56. *CIIC*: 424.
  57. SM 856 239.
  58. *CIIC*: 426.
  59. *CIIC*: 425.
  60. *CIIC*: 422.
  61. SM 857 240.
  62. *CIIC*: 429.
  63. SN 250 355.
  64. *CIIC*: 429.
  65. *CIIC*: 428.
  66. *CIIC*: 432.
  67. SN 285 283.
  68. Thomas 1994.

## References

- A.W. Wade-Evans, A.W. a S. Lloyd. 2013. *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae Et Genealogiae: The Lives and Genealogies of the Welsh Saints*. Caerdydd: Gwasg Academaidd Cymru.
- Alcock, L. 1970. Was There an Irish Sea Culture-Province in the Dark Ages? Yn Moore, D. (gol.) *The Irish Sea Province in Archaeology and History* Caerdydd: Cymd. Hynafiaethau Cymru: 55-65.
- Bartrum, P.C. 1993. *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*. Aberystwyth: Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru.
- Davies, S. 2007. *The Mabinogion*. Gwasg Prifysgol Rhydychen.
- Jackson, K. 1953. *Language and History in Early Britain*. Gwasg Prifysgol Caeredin.
- Jacot de Boinod, A. 2005. *The Meaning of Tingo*. Llundain.

- Jones, C. a D. Thorne. 1992. *Dyfed: Blas ar ei Thafodieithoedd*. Llandysul: Gomer.
- Jones, T. 1804. *A History of the County of Brecknock*. Brecon: W. & G. North.
- Macalister, R.A.S. 1945 (ailargraffwyd 1996). *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum: The Ogham Inscriptions of Ireland and Britain*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Morris, J. 1993. *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles, 350-650*. Llundain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Parry, T. (gol.) 1962. *Blodeugerdd Rhydychen o Farddoniaeth Gymraeg*. Gwasg Prifysgol Rhydychen.
- Rhŷs, J. 1901. *Celtic Folklore*. Gwasg Prifysgol Rhydychen.
- Siddons, M.P. 1993. *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*. Aberystwyth: Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru.
- Thomas, C. 1994. *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?* Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
- Wells, D. 1986. *Penguin Dictionary of Curious and Interesting Numbers*. Llundain: Penguin.

### **Brycheiniog Volume XLVII (2016): Beaches Far From the Sea, Brynach Parry**

Geiriadur y Brifysgol<sup>1</sup> The University of Wales Dictionary restricts the meanings of 'traeth' (beach) to seaside features, apart from one definition with a question mark ('?dubious') which is interpreted as a 'a piece of land'.

In an area such as Brecknockshire, far from the sea, and which, at its lowest points (near Hay-on-Wye on the English border and near Glangrwyne not far from a farm with the interesting and unique name Cydiad y Ddwysir (The Joining of the Two Counties, i.e. Brecknock and Gwent) is 77 metres above sea level (and likely to remain without a sea coast unless the Arctic ice melts completely), it comes as a surprise to see the place-name 'Traeth' - a beach - on maps of the former county. There are three examples of the name in its local meaning within Brecknockshire (and a fourth, dubious, one), each one in similar circumstances, representing the same geographical feature.

The first two examples of the name are on Mynydd Illtud, near the A470 south of Brecon: Traeth Mawr - Great Beach [SO967253], and its twin Traeth Bach - Little Beach [SO967258]. These names are associated with shallow marshy pools on the high moorland with exceptional views of Cadair Arthur (Pen-y-Fan and Corn Du) and the Central Beacons (Fig 1)

In an article in the Journal *The New Phytologist* on the vegetational history of the surrounding area, M. J. C. Walker describes a glacial hollow which was subsequently filled with a large lake covering an area of almost a square kilometre<sup>2</sup>. Over the millennia this lake became colonised with vegetation to create peaty wetland and the 'traethau'. Traeth Mawr depends on rainfall for its water, and consequently dries out and even disappears during exceptionally dry weather in the summer. Its waters are acidic. By contrast, Traeth Bach is fed by springs and this makes the water much more alkaline.

As described by Walker, birch *Betula pubescens* dominates much of the site and this is interspersed with copses of willow *Salix* and occasional small trees of Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, while shrubs of common alder *Alnus glutinosa* occur along some of the watercourses. Large areas of the bog surface are covered by cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*, with small stands of whinberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and cowberry *Empetrum nigrum* on the drier tussocks. The intervening damp hollows are typically occupied by species of rush (particularly *Juncus communis* and *J. effusus*), along with insectivorous plants such as butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). The principal mosses are *Polytrichum commune* and *Sphagnum* (mostly *S. rubellum* and *S. papillosum*). For three species of flowering plant saw sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), lesser water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*) and



least bur-reed (*Sparganium natans*), Traeth mawr is the only locality in the vice-county of Breconshire from which they have been recorded<sup>3</sup>.

The locality is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the two traithau are part of the Deudraeth Illtud Nature Reserve, in the care of the Brecknock Wildlife Trust. E. Cambridge Phillips recorded the presence of water birds such as the Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*/Rhegen Fraith) and the Reed Bunting (*Emberiza choeniclus*/Bras y Cyrs) in the past, although his interest seems to have been primarily in shooting them<sup>4</sup>. The former, now a rarity in Wales, has not bred on the reserve since the early 1990's, but 5-6 pairs of Reed Bunting breed across the two traithau every year<sup>5</sup>. The Reserve is known as one of the best sites in Wales for dragonflies and damselflies. Fifteen species have been noted here and it supports an important population of the Red Data-listed Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly<sup>6</sup>.

It should be noted that 'Illtyd' rather than the correct form 'Illtud' is the spelling seen on road-signs in the area, and this is the orthography preferred by local shepherds and commoners (to avoid the erroneous pronunciation of the 'u' by English speakers, a fate similar to the pronunciation of 'Llandudno').

There are a number of myths and legends attached to Traeth Mawr, some gathered from local farmers in Ynys Gron, and Pwlllyn Brwnt. It is claimed that there is a drowned village in the waters of Traeth Mawr, similar to the 'history' of the 'city' in Llyn Safaddan - Llangors Lake, and it is possible that the place-name 'Trefothi', formerly the home of the local cobbler, now lost, but possibly at SN9635 2610, is connected with the verb 'boddi' - to drown. (The English spelling 'th' represents the voiced sound of 'though', spelt 'dd' in Welsh, a common substitution, as in Therow for Y Dderw). This has been interpreted as evidence for the existence of a crannog in the lake before the development of the marshland, similar to that in Llyn Syfaddan: a defensive structure almost unique in Wales, although very common in Ireland. Perhaps it is the half-Irish background of the Kingdom of Brycheiniog which is responsible for this.

Mynydd Illtud, the home of the National Park Visitor Centre, is of great interest in itself, with standing stones and other prehistoric remains associated with Illtud, one of the earliest saints in this very 'saintly' district. One of these is marked erroneously on some maps as 'Bedd Illtud' - Illtud's Grave, whereas the correct name is Bedd Gŵyl Illtud - the Grave of Illtud's Watchnight, since it was here that a torchlight vigil was kept on the night before the Feast of Saint Illtud, 6 November, as it still is in Illtud's great 'university' foundation, Llanilltud Fawr - Llantwit Major. On either side of the Grave, there are two standing stones, which, according to the legend, are the two thieves who tried to steal Illtud's cattle, who were punished by being turned to stone, a very common theme in Welsh hagiography.

The oldest Life of a Celtic saint still extant, that of Samson, Illtud's pupil, of Dol de Bretagne<sup>7</sup>, is adamant that Illtud was buried in his homeland of Brycheiniog. The 'Grave' is of course much more ancient than our Illtud of the Age of Saints, as it is of Bronze Age origin<sup>8</sup>, and is comparable to another prehistoric tomb associated with the saint, Tŷ Illtud - Illtud's House - near Llanhamlach (also an Illtud dedication), which bears the marks of crosses scratched in the inside wall of the grave by mediaeval pilgrims. The tomb may have been a place of retreat for the saint. In Brittany, too, which has as many place-names (c.44) connected with Illtud as here in Wales, he is associated with another Neolithic grave, Roc'h Ildut, near Bourbriac, unfortunately pulled down over a century ago.

According to local tradition, the saint's grave was indeed here in Llanilltud, the ancient church near the Mountain Centre on the edge of the common, which regrettably was demolished sometime in the second half of the last century due to a dispute regarding access for restoration. The church

stood in a circular graveyard, seen as a sign of an ancient foundation, with a circle of yew trees around it. The pulpit was taken to the Brecknock Museum in Brecon.

A further example of the name within the county occurs at Llyn Traeth Bach [SN875258] - Traeth Bach Lake - in the parish of Traianglas, near a bridle path a little to the east of the parish road between Trecastell, on the Usk, and Tafarn y Garreg in the Swansea Valley, which turns left just after the Portis water works. The lake was created here by the construction of a dam to hold back water in a damp area, the Traeth Bach which gave its name to the lake. The land was part of the Belfont estate, which retained the old name 'Glasfynydd' into the twentieth century<sup>9</sup>, the existence of a Boat House at the water's edge confirming the leisure nature of this artificial lake.

Beyond Brecknock's current boundaries, but within the historic county, a farm in the Penderyn area bears a name which is possibly a further example, although it has appeared in various different guises in the past. The house in question is Ynys Wendraeth [SN946094], alongside the A4059, some 800 metres to the north of the inn in Penderyn. The name was recorded as 'Ynyswendorth' at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, but Ynys Wendraeth is the most frequently recorded form. It is unclear as to why the gender of traeth should have changed from the standard masculine to a feminine form here.

No similar use of the element 'traeth' is recorded elsewhere in Wales, but since Brecknockshire and Radnorshire are the only counties with no sea-coast (Montgomeryshire, usually considered an inland county, has the tidal reaches of the Dyfi below the bridge between Llanelltyd and Machynlleth), it is hardly surprising that the other counties retain the description traeth for 'proper' beaches at the sea shore alone.

## NOTES

1. Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, Cyfrol IV, tud. 3543/4
2. Walker 1982.
3. Information provided by Mr M. J. Porter.
4. Phillips 1899 and quotations in Ingram and Salmon 1957: 213 and 252.
5. Information provided by Mr K. Noble.
6. Information provided by Mr A. King.
7. Taylor 1925.
8. Formerly considered to be a mound between two megalithic standing stones, Bedd GÅµyl Illtud is now regarded as a Bronze Age ring cairn (See CADW, Scheduling Records BR 326 cited in RCAHMW, Coflein Database, Ref 305061).
9. Powell 1986/87 and 1993.

## REFERENCES

- Ingram, Geoffrey C. S. and Salmon, H. M. 1957. The Birds of Breconshire. *Brycheiniog* 3: 181-255.
- Phillips, E. C. 1899 [1882]. The Birds of Breconshire. Brecon: Edwin Davies.
- Powell, R. F. P. 1986/87. Place Names of Devynock Hundred II. *Brycheiniog* 22: 78-111.
- Powell, R.F. P. 1993. The Place-Names of Devynock Hundred. Penpont: Privately Published.
- Taylor, T. 1925. Life of Saint Samson of Dol. London: SPCK.
- Walker, M. J. C. 1982. The late-Glacial and Early Flandrian Deposits at Traeth Mawr, Brecon Beacons South Wales. *New Phytologist* 90(1): 177-194.

**Brycheiniog Volume XLVII (2016): How Do You Get 42 Saints into One Poem? Huw Cae Llwyd's Praise for the Saints of Brycheiniog, Eurig Salisbury, pages 51-70.**

*This article is a short adaptation of a Welsh-language article on the same subject that appeared in Brycheiniog XLVIII (2016), pp. 51–70, namely an examination of a poem by Huw Cae Llwyd that has been edited for the Cult of Saints in Wales (2015–) project at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth, whose bilingual editions of medieval Welsh-language poetry addressed to saints, as well as the prose lives and the saints’ genealogies, will be launched online in 2017. For the standard edition of the poem, see Harries 1953: poem XLV.*

The modern obsession with the successful branding of goods and services has made the word ‘marketing’ ubiquitous. Even Brycheiniog, whose custodians were advised in a recent review to boost readership with a ‘marketing campaign’, is not immune to its seeming importance (Review of Brycheiniog: 19). The word ‘marchnata’ was not widely used in medieval Wales, nevertheless the Welsh poets of the period were natural self-aggrandizers and would have been very familiar with the concept. None more so than one of Brycheiniog’s foremost medieval poets, Huw Cae Llwyd (fl. 1431–1504), who in 1475 composed a remarkable poem of praise for the saints of Brycheiniog that can be best described as a fifteenth-century marketing campaign par excellence.

A total of 42 saints are named in Huw’s poem, all of whom were associated with a holy site in Brycheiniog. This inspiring feat was prompted in the first place by Huw’s desire to go on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1475 – a jubilee year during which plenary indulgence might be obtained by a pilgrimage to the city – but more specifically by the practical matter of getting there and back. In stating his intention to travel as far as Rome, he sought *nerth*, a wonderfully nuanced word that indicated both physical (or perhaps spiritual) ‘strength’ to undertake the arduous journey across the continent and, more pointedly, ‘support’, almost certainly of a financial nature (Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru Ar Lein 2014– s.v. *nerth*). Giving thanks for patronage and openly soliciting gifts were essential parts of any poet’s repertoire, yet Huw’s unusually subtle request for money in this poem has more in common with the modern practice of crowdfunding – the financing of a project or venture by raising money from a large number of people – whose proposers are often at pains to acknowledge the unorthodox nature of their request for money (Walker 2011). In seeking *nerth* for a future project, rather than general patronage or a specific gift, Huw was indeed trying something quite different, the difficulties of which may be reflected in his cautious reluctance to make his intentions plainly obvious.

His audience, nevertheless, would surely not have missed the point. Huw’s enterprise is surprisingly evocative of modern crowdfunding projects on leading websites like Kickstarter (2015–), which often provide small gifts in exchange for donations, but the gifts dangled in front of Huw’s potential patrons in Brycheiniog were seemingly much more valuable than a t-shirt or a handmade trinket. He was offering to pray on behalf of his fellow-countrymen in the churches of Rome, effectively attaining remission of the punishment for their sins and escape from the torment of purgatory. For good measure, Huw also not-so-subtly appealed to his audience’s spiritual conscience. *Da i werin ystyriaid / Neu ofni’r Hwn a fo’n rhaid*: ‘The people would do well’, he argues, ‘to consider or fear Him who is essential’, and also to contemplate the trials of the soul after death. Kickstarter is not even in the same league.

But Huw had other tactics at his disposal, not least his skill as a strict-metre poet. His ability to string together a large number of personal names in many of his praise poems – as was customary in that genre – is put to less conventional use in this poem by naming 42 saints (23 native and 19 international), as well as Christ (in the form of a Rood) and God, in the space of twenty lines (19–36):

Ceisïaf, ymglywaf o’*m* gwlad,  
Gan **Gynog** wyn ei ganiad.  
Y gwŷr doniog o’*r* dinas,

*I’ll ask, from my land I’ll sense it,  
holy **Cynog** for his permission.  
The blessed men of the town,*

**Ieuan a’r Grog**, ynn yw’r gras;  
**Mair, Mihangel** ac **Eluw**,  
**Mathau** deg, cydymaith **Duw**;  
**Dewi, Pawl**, da yw **Peulun**,  
**Domnig, Byneddig** yn un;  
**Teilo, Ulltud, Saint Elen**,  
**Tyfaelog** at **Filo, Gwen**;  
**Margred, Catrin, Aeled, Non**,  
**Ffraid, Iago, Wenffryd, Eigion**.  
**Saint Lidnerth** a’n cyfnertho,  
**Saint Silin** neu **Farthin** fo;  
**Brynach, Nicolas, Castau**,  
**Meugan, Degeman** ill dau;  
 Da wŷr, **Gynydr** a **Gweino**,  
**Detu** fab, da ytiw fo;  
**Cenau, Elli**, cain **Wallwen**,  
**Catwg, Simwnt, Edmwnt** hen.

***John and the Rood**, are our grace;  
**Mary, Michael and Elyw**,  
 fair **Matthew, God’s** companion;  
**David, Paul, Peulin** is good,  
**Dominic, Benedict** the same;  
**Teilo, Illtud, St Helen**,  
**Tyfaelog** to **Bilio, Gwen**;  
**Margaret, Catherine, Aeled, Non**,  
**Brigid, James, Winefrede, Eigion**.  
 May **St Leonard** support us,  
 may there be **St Silin** or **Martin**;  
**Brynach, Nicholas, Castau**,  
 both **Meugan** and **Degyman**;  
**Cynidr** and **Gwynno**, good men,  
**Detu** the youth, he too is good;  
**Cenau, Elli**, fine **Callwen**,  
**Cadog, Simon, Edmund** the old.*

Pride of place at the beginning of the list is given to Cynog, the foremost saint of Brycheiniog, after which Huw names John and the Rood, the patron saint of Brecon cathedral and its famous medieval image of Christ respectively, and then Mary of Saint Mary’s church in the town, a clear indication that the poem was performed either in Brecon or somewhere nearby. The remaining saints cover the length and breadth of Brycheiniog, from well-known saints associated with multiple churches, like Cynidr and Michael, to the lesser-attested Brigid and Detu, both of whom have only one dedication each in the region. The association of some seven saints – Paul, Helen, Margaret, James, Martin, Simon and Winefrede – with a holy place in Brycheiniog is unknown, and any information on their possible whereabouts by the knowledgeable readers of Brycheiniog would be most welcome.

Accomplishing this poetic feat is likely to have benefitted Huw in two ways. Naming as many of the saints of Brycheiniog as possible would have endeared to his cause a great many of his potential financial backers in every corner of the region. The aforementioned Cynidr had a near unrivalled reach from Glasbury in the north all the way to Llangynidr in the east and Aberysgir in the west, whereas patrons in the remote uplands of Glyntawe could only be reached by evoking the rather obscure Callwen of Capel Callwen. Second, the feat is likely to have underlined Huw’s complete mastery of words, a skill that was readily transferrable to the task of fashioning or conveying prayers on behalf of the people of Brycheiniog in the churches of Rome.

A detailed examination of eight other poems containing long lists of names highlights the technical accomplishment of Huw’s poem. In terms of the ratio of figures named per line, two fourteenth-century cywyddau to the apostles by Dafydd ap Gwilym (dafyddapgwilym.net 2007–: poem 4) and Iolo Goch (Johnston 1993: poem 27) are roughly comparable with three fifteenth-century healing cywyddau – one by Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan (Bryant-Quinn 2003: poem 6) and two by Guto’r Glyn (gutorglyn.net 2013–: poems 69, 92) – in which a series of saints are summoned to restore either the poet or his patron to health. All four poets take more than one line to name a holy figure, whereas the ratios of four other fifteenth-century poems, including Huw’s, fall below that threshold. An average of about one saint per line is found in sections of both Lewys Glyn Cothi’s cywydd to the cantref of Elfael (Johnston 1995: poem 141, a similar poem to Huw’s in many respects) and Hywel Dafi’s awdl to Edward IV (Lake 2015: poem 71), in which some 60 holy figures are summoned to bless the king’s military campaign in France in 1475, the very same year that Huw embarked on his pilgrimage to Rome. One other poem remains, namely an awdl by Dafydd Nanmor to Henry Tudor

(Roberts and Williams 1923: poem XVII), in which the poet sought to further the cause of the future king by naming a grand total of 109 saints in the space 36 lines – less than half a line per saint.

The ratio in Huw's poem – one saint per half a line – is the most impressive of the poems in the cywydd metre, but is slightly higher than Dafydd's awdl. However, the fact that Dafydd had the luxury of naming his saints in a rather slack nonasyllabic metre of his own devising points to the ultimate superiority of Huw's cywydd, whose heptasyllabic lines were further embellished with particularly ornate cynganeddion and occasional cymeriad (the linking of lines by beginning each line with a vowel or the same consonant or word).

Whilst it is unlikely that Huw's audience would have been able to differentiate between these poems to this level of detail (even if they were known to them), this comparative investigation nonetheless underlines the virtuosity of Huw's poem. In one couplet alone he succeeded in naming eight saints, surely the highest number possible in a strict-metre cywydd couplet of fourteen syllables.

Huw's efforts did not go unrewarded. He did indeed secure some financial nerth for his journey to Rome, although seemingly not from an assortment of patrons from all corners of Brycheiniog, as he may have wished, but from a single patron who lived at Peutun-gwyn near Llanddew, north of Brecon (Coflein 2016– s.v. Peytin-Gwyn). Ieuan ap Gwilym Fychan was one of Huw's principal patrons, for whom five of his poems have survived (Lake 2014), including two composed during or soon after Huw's pilgrimage to Rome. One is a valuable record of Huw's tour of numerous holy sites around the city, at the end of which he longs to be home again in the company of mab Gwilym 'the son of Gwilym' (Lewis 2015: poem 16), whilst the other poem deals exclusively with the poet's longing for Ieuan on his return to Wales (Harries 1953: poem XXX). Huw evidently arrived home safe and well, for both poems, along with his earlier poem to the saints of Brycheiniog, were recorded in NLW MS Peniarth 54 (NLW Dafydd ap Gwilym and the Cywyddwyr 2015–) – the earliest major collection of the poetry of the Cywyddwyr – probably in the poet's own hand at Ieuan's home in Peutun.

Of the thousands of crowdfunding projects posted on the Kickstarter website up to September 2016, less than 65% had succeeded in attaining funding (Kickstarter Stats 2016–). Many wannabe entrepreneurs could surely learn a thing or two about securing patronage from Huw Cae Llwyd, one of the fifteenth-century's great marketing experts.

## References

- Bryant-Quinn, M. P. (gol.) 2003. Gwaith Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan, Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd a Lewys Aled. Aberystwyth: Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru.
- Coflein. 2016–. <<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/16085/details/peytin-gwynpytin-gwyn>>.
- The Cult of Saints in Wales. 2015–. <<http://www.welshsaints.ac.uk/>>.
- dafyddapgwilym.net. 2007–. <[http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/index\\_cym.php](http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/index_cym.php)>.
- Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru Ar Lein. 2014–. <<http://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>>.
- gutorglyn.net. 2013–. <<http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/index/>>.
- Harries, L. (gol.) 1953. Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill. Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
- Johnston, D. (ed.) 1993. Iolo Goch: Poems. Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer.
- Johnston, D. (gol.) 1995. Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi. Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
- Kickstarter. 2016–. <<https://www.kickstarter.com>>.
- Kickstarter Stats. 2016–. <[https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats?ref=about\\_subnav](https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats?ref=about_subnav)>.
- Lake, A. C. 2014. Huw Cae Llwyd: tri nodyn. Dwned 20: 65–77.

Lake, A. C. (gol.) 2015. Gwaith Hywel Dafu. Aberystwyth: Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru.

Lewis, B. J. (ed.) 2015. Medieval Welsh Poems to Saints and Shrines. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

NLW Dafydd ap Gwilym and the Cywyddwyr. 2016-. <<https://www.llgc.org.uk/en/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/dafydd-ap-gwilym-and-the-cywyddwyr/>>.

Review of Brycheiniog – Results of the Consultation. 2014.

<<http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk/docs/results-consultation.pdf>>.

Roberts, T. ad Williams, I. (eds). 1923. The Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. London: Humphrey Milford.

**Eurig Salisbury** is a lecturer in creative writing at the Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth University, and a researcher on the Cult of Saints in Wales project at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. He has edited the work of a number of medieval Welsh poets (including Guto'r Glyn), and is also a published poet. Website: [www.eurig.cymru](http://www.eurig.cymru). Twitter: @eurig. Email: [eis1@aber.ac.uk](mailto:eis1@aber.ac.uk).

### **Brycheinog Volume XLIII (2012): The Home of the "Family" in Trefeca, E. D. Evan, pages 131-6**

1735 and 1750 were notable years in the religious history of Brecknockshire and of Wales. In 1735, Howell Harris experienced a conversion which was a stimulus for the start of the religious revival generally called the Methodist Revival. In 1750, Howell Harris broke his connection with that movement, turning to establish 'Y Cartref' - 'The Home' for the 'Teulu' - the Family - in Trefeca. This year, the Methodist Union, now The Presbyterian Church of Wales, is celebrating two hundred years of its separation from the Church of England, and it is totally appropriate to remind ourselves of the key rôle of Brecknockshire in this connection.

By 1750, Howell Harris had worn himself out with his frequent journeying and endless preaching and the persecution he suffered in many places whilst preaching the Gospel. If only for that, his health would have forced him to give up, but Harris was not a man to resign himself to idleness, and he turned the circumstances into an opportunity to realize a dream that had interested him since 1732. As a young man he had worked as a teacher in the Trefeca area, chiefly in Llangasty. His conversion under the ministry of the Rev. Pryce Davies, Vicar of Talgarth, had caused him unease and to seek a wider field for his service. In May 1736, he heard of Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, instigator of the Circulating Schools charity, apparently through his connection with the Rev. Thomas Jones, of Cwm Yoy. Harris' intentions were to become a priest, but since he was unwilling to follow the usual path which would have qualified him for that calling, Griffith Jones advised him to continue as a teacher but to widen his field through supervising some of his schools that had by then spread to Brecknockshire. Harris's interest in education from the very beginning should be emphasised here.

In December 1736, he heard of an establishment in Fulneck, Yorkshire, set up by the Moravians on the pattern of a similar establishment in Saxony in Germany which included schools for children. It is possible that Griffith Jones, through his connection with Sir John Phillipps, Picton Castle, Pembrokeshire, who was interested in the Pietist movement which sprang from that source, who inspired Harris' interest in setting up a similar plan in Trefeca. So the idea of establishing the Cartref - the Home - had been in Harris' mind since 1736. Looking back over his life in his memoirs published in 1791, he talks of 'having an impression in my mind for some years past, that I should build a house for God'. After long contemplation of his future, he came to the conclusion 'that God would settle me so as I may be useful to Him... I resolv'd to lay £200 to build an Almshouse and school house to instruct and teach self and to employ as many as I could of firm zealots to teach'.i However, before he could carry out that intention, he had in 1737 met Daniel Rowland, determining to co-operate in

evangelising Wales through preaching the Word and establishing Fellowships amidst those converted, the first of these at Y Wernos in 1738. There is no need here to trace the history of the religious revival that spread through the whole of Wales up until 1750. By then it was obvious to Harris that things were not going the way he would have wished, since he met with opposition to his efforts to manage the movement, especially from the direction of ordained priests such as Daniel Rowland. For this reason Harris grew tired of the frustration, and he claimed that as well as his own will, God's intention was being obstructed. He experienced a disillusionment, and separated from his fellow workers, turning to his early intention of establishing a community of people drawn to Trefeca who had been convinced by his preaching. He was convinced that he was doing God's work through establishing a theocratic community with God at its head, and with His Word as a rule of life for them, under Harris' supervision as His servant. He maintained that 'everything done at Trefeca is by Christ's Will'.ii

Historians looked upon Harris' action in breaking away from the Methodist movement to establish the Home at Trefeca as a fundamental mistake. Williams, Pantycelyn, gave expression to the accusation in describing Harris as retreating to his 'great monastery'. This is a completely negative attitude, since he was not retiring from one duty in order to idle away his time, but rather to take advantage of an opportunity to realise an early dream of his, where he would have the permanent freedom to work out his own ideas. As far as I know, no-one has suggested that this could be at least one reason for Harris to part from his fellow leaders in 1750. This was not an admission of failure at all but rather an opening into a new and experimental field which no-one in Wales had previously envisaged. Harris' zeal and commitment to the work was a guarantee of its success and it is a testimony to this that it continued to prosper after his death in 1773.

According to the diary kept by Evan Moses, building work began at Trefeca Fach, after the death of Madam Sidney Griffith following the demolition of the old home of Harris and his mother. But Madam Griffith was present when the foundation stone there was laid by her, followed by a prayer for its success. She had entailed the sum of £400 to Harris towards the work, but she died within two months and the money was retained by her brother, Watkin Wynne of Foelas, Denbighshire. Even though he had no financial security, Harris proceeded with the building work, confident that God would provide. Everyone who joined the Family was expected to transfer their property to the general fund.

Sarah Bowen of the Tyddyn, Llanidloes, did just this upon joining, bringing in a sum of £280 which later on became a bone of contention. Harris was fortunate in attracting a number of good craftsmen to the Family, and it was they who carried out the building work which continued until 1759. Harris himself was the architect, and it was apparent that he had noted architectural elegance when on visits to London and Bath through his connection with Lady Huntingdon. His chosen style was Georgian, but there was a tinge of the Gothic style in the Venetian windows. Notable features were the balcony, cupola, sundial, great clock with a weather vane atop the tower, displaying an angel blowing a silver trumpet and the inscription below 'Cyfodwch feirw, a dewch i'r Farn'. (Arise ye Dead and come to Judgement). Harris believed that cleanliness was next to godliness and he added a cold bath. He paid attention to the environment by planting flower gardens with paths for strolling. John Wesley praised the house and its surroundings as a little paradise. Not so Benjamin Heath Malkin who visited Trefeca on his journey through South Wales in 1803. 'Here a Gothic Arch! There a Corinthian capital! Towers, battlements and bastions! Peacocks cut in box, and lions hacked in holly! Who has then deluged his native county with such bad taste?'iii. These ejaculations suggest a rejection of Harris mixture of architectural styles but give a detailed description of what had outlived Harris himself. Pevsner's collaborators noted the building with more appreciationiv.

The building work proceeded swiftly, and by 1759 seven downstairs rooms and seven upstairs had been completed. Workshops were constructed for the craftsmen, a bakery to supply the Family, an infirmary for the sick, and a chapel in 1758. When Lady Huntingdon decided to open a college nearby at Trefeca Isaf, building work recommenced in 1765, and by 1772 the entire building was in the form of three houses containing 70 rooms, 21 of them set aside for the use of the Lady and her entourage.

There was therefore plenty of accommodation for the growing Family which had increased from about 60 people by 1753 to about 100 by 1755, some of them members of ten families in their midst. The increase in the Family was so rapid that Harris had to take several nearby farms on rent to accommodate the overflow. There was quite a lot of coming and going since some people could not come to terms with Harris' severe discipline, and he was criticised by some, amongst them Simon Lloyd, of being cruel. Harris' response to this was that everyone was free to leave if they wished, but things could not have been so bad since some of those who left did return. After all, the Family offered security of accommodation, food and company, rarities in a poor Wales, with everyone dependent on Harris to meet their needs. Harris deserves praise for organising a successful and unique cooperative society, almost one hundred years before Robert Owen carried out his experiments at New Lanark and in America.

Everything in the Home was organised right down to a daily programme for each member. The women carried much of the burden, and Harris was mindful of this and placed them under the management of a Mistress, initially Sarah Bowen, and, after she left to marry Simon Lloyd, her sister Hannah. When Sarah married in 1755, she demanded from Harris a repayment of the £280 she had contributed to the fund, but Harris refused, arguing that she had made her contribution to God, and not to him. John Evans, an old friend of Thomas Charles, had to come down from Bala to mediate and agreement was reached. Nevertheless, Harris condemned them for turning their backs on Trefeca as 'ildio i ysbryd y byd' - 'yielding to the spirit of the world - ', since it was God who had brought them there. Thereafter, Hannah was Mistress of the house for a good fifteen years, with many a skirmish between herself and Harris. On more than one occasion, she fled to Bristol, and, in 1759, Harris had to go and bring her back, the two of them returning on the back of the same horse. She stayed in Harris' service until 1758, when she left for a similar situation in Lady Huntingdon's College. Harris' wife was sorry to lose her since she had been a good friend.

One of the women was appointed to take care of the children, about 30 of them, including Harris' daughter. The children rose at six a.m. for breakfast, having gone to bed the previous evening at eight o'clock. They spent part of the day being educated in the fashion of Griffith Jones' schools, it seems, and in addition learning to sing the Psalms, and they swelled the Talgarth church choir on Sundays. They were expected to work in their leisure time, since Harris believed the devil made work for idle hands. Harris was a severe disciplinarian, giving one boy a really nasty beating for telling a lie. His aim was to imbue an awareness of responsibility in the children.

The community had to be self-sufficient since there was no money coming in from anywhere else. The first call was for the maintenance of the numerous Family and so agriculture and gardening were essential parts of the work. To this purpose, Harris worked six farms extending to 765 acres, to an extent land taken on rent from estates such as Tregunter which had been bought by his brother Thomas. A wide variety of crops were grown such as wheat, barley, corn, potatoes, turnips and peas, which show the influence of the agricultural revolution underway at that time. Howell, like his brother Joseph, had a great interest in scientific farming, and he carried out experiments to improve animal breeds as well as crops. When Harris heard that an alternative method of cultivation was being applied in Herefordshire, he sent Evan Roberts, the work supervisor, to make inquiries there.



Howell Harris' interest in agriculture led to the establishment of the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society, the first in Wales, when he succeeded in turning a drinking and feasting society attended by the gentry of the county to a more useful purpose. The main aim of the Society was the promotion of agriculture and rural crafts for the good of the county and in particular to give the poor work. In the opinion of Charles Powell of Castle Madoc, the intention was to make them good Christians and citizens. At the suggestion of Sir Edward Williams of Llangoed, Harris was elected an Honorary Member of the Society in 1756. Trefeca agriculture made its mark on the standards of farming in the county, but not without giving rise to some envy, and Trefeca was blamed for the high prices of food in the area.

Before long, sixty different rural crafts were practised in Trefeca since so many craftsmen had settled there. The carpenters and masons were in the charge of James Pritchard, winning praise for their work from every direction, since, when there was no pressure of work in Trefeca, they were hired out to neighbours. In a letter of thanks to Harris, Sir Edward Williams, Llangoed, praised his workmen as sober, quiet and honest men. Their behaviour, he said, was a credit to the religious principles Harris was going to such lengths to impress upon them. Their fame spread as far as Monmouthshire, where the iron master Capel Hanbury heard of them, inviting Harris to take up the construction of a turnpike road in his area, but he refused.

Cloth was produced and sold in markets as far away as Chester and beyond, which brought in most of the Family's income. Here once again, Harris was a pioneer in the method in which he organised the work of production, bringing all relevant tasks under the one roof, and thus creating the first factory ever to be established in Wales. He was even ahead of Adam Smith, the Scottish philosopher, who urged the 'division of Labour' as the most economic method of production vii . Harris' method was to divide up the work between eight spinners, four carders, one weighing the wool and preparing it, one winding the thread, and four weavers. Harris would have liked experimenting to produce broader cloth at a higher value, but he was advised that the wool he used was too coarse for that purpose. Howell drew in his brothers Joseph and Thomas to seek out markets in England for his produce. Harris wanted everyone to work cheerfully and to their full ability, and to bow obediently to his discipline. Having observed the order at Trefeca, Williams, Pantycelyn, included in his elegy to Harris:

Ac ti wnest dy blant yn ufudd,  
At eu galwad bod yrun,  
Byw i'th reol, byw i'th gyfraith,  
Byw i'th olau di dy hun.

You made your children obedient,  
Each one to his vocation,  
Living by your rule, your law,  
Living according to your own light.

A part of the day was set aside for each task. The family rose early at four, and, after breakfast, tasks were allocated by Harris. At six o'clock they went out to work until twelve noon, when they would return for a further service before lunch at one o'clock. At eight o'clock the children would be sent to bed after supper and the Family would sit down to eat at half past eight before retiring to bed after another service with Harris inquiring of each one regarding their spiritual condition. Harris would counsel for two or three hours each day, impressing on everyone that everything was done to the glory of God, and therefore demanding everyone's best. Laborare est orare was his motto. It is unsurprising that Evan Moses believed that God had set aside Trefeca for Himself.

Another venture of Harris' was to set up a printing press using money contributed to the Treasury by Barbara Parryviii. It appears that it was Harris' intention to publish his diaries and he kept a secretary to chronicle everything. This was not achieved in his lifetime, but served as the basis for the memoirs published in 1791 after his death. The first task of the press was the printing of notices of the Brecknock Agricultural Society as early as 1758. Its most productive period was from 1770 to 1805, when over one hundred works were published, since the press continued printing after Harris' death in 1773. The greatest task undertaken was the printing of Peter Williams' Bible which led to his expulsion by the Methodists, but no blame was cast on Trefeca. A more adventurous act was printing some numbers of Morgan John Rhys' Cylchgrawn Cynmraeg (The Welsh Magazine) before fleeing to America, a cause of great concern to Evan Moses ix.

It can therefore be seen that the Home in Trefeca was a completely unique experiment in Wales, and it was not because of its failure that Harris rejoined the Methodist leaders in 1762 following their ardent invitation, and more or less on his own terms. However, he was not as energetic in the work of travelling around evangelising as he had been before 1750. He realised his early dream of establishing a theocratic community which was as much a success in the practical world. Harris proved himself to be a successful businessman as well as an agricultural pioneer. He was prominent in the establishment of an early agricultural society and in setting up a factory before anyone else. After 1765, he turned to another interest, namely the education of the ministry, since education had been a lifelong interest for him. He was instrumental in the establishment of Lady Huntingdon's college, and although he was not appointed principal, through his care of it he was its most stable anchor up until his death in 1773. The Family continued on under three trustees, Evan Moses, Evan Roberts and James Pritchard. When the establishment came to an end in 1837, the property came into the possession of the Methodist Union who opened a school for the training of ministers there.

E D EVANS

- i. National Library of Wales, Trefeca Archive, Diary No. 18, page 10, 10 January 1736-7.
- ii. Schlenther, B.S. and White, E.M., Calendar of Trevecka Letters, page 352, no. 2061 ('TL' below)
- iii. Malkin, B H, The Scenery, Antiquities and Biographies of South Wales, 1807.
- iv. Buildings of Wales - Powys ed. B Haslam, Pevsner series.
- v. Davies, K Monica, Teulu Trefeca in Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru, Ed. G M Roberts. Caernarfon 1973, pp358 - 377.
- vi. Schlenther and White, op. cit, tud 360, No.2106
- vii. Smith, Adam, The Wealth of Nations, 1776.
- viii. Schlenther and White, ibid., page 395, No.2354
- ix. Owens, A.W., The Printing Press, CCHMC 3 page 67