

## The Welsh Bardic Tradition week 4

### 1. Madog ap Maredydd.

- King of Powys 1132 – 1160.
- His son and heir, Llywelyn ap Madog was killed soon after his death.
- According to *Brut y Tywysogion* (a medieval history of the Welsh princes), Llywelyn was ‘the only hope for the men of Powys’.
- The end of the royal lineage of Powys.
- The Dream of Rhonabwy: Madog son of Maredudd ruled Powys from one end to the other, that is, from Porffordd to Gwfan in the uplands of Arwystli.

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Then, behold, poets came to perform a poem for Arthur. And no one understood the poem, apart from Cadyriaith himself, except that it was in praise of Arthur.

- Cadyriaith ap Saidi (Fair-speech, son of Otherworld?)

### 2. Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, *fl.* 1150 – 1195.

- May have originally come from the Conwy Valley area.
- May not have descended from a bardic family.
- Served as pencerdd in all three royal courts of Wales in a career spanning 45 years.
- “They were men of status, . . . companions and friends to the prince, speaking at court on political matters and ready to fight – and die – beside their lords.” (Owen, ‘Noddwyr a Beirdd’, p. 86)
- 48 poems recorded on manuscript (3852 lines of verse), more than twice the number of recorded poems by Llywarch ap Llywelyn, the second most productive in the *Gogynfeirdd* period.

3. Cynddelw on Cynddelw (excerpts from vols. III and IV of *Beirdd y Tywysogion*, Cardiff):

Credaf-i Beryf Nef yn elfydd  
A'm gwnaeth o burawr yn brydydd. (III 3.209-10)

*I believe the Lord of Heaven on Earth  
Made me a master poet out of a musician.*

Mor wyf gyfrin ffyrdd cyrdd Cyridfen, . . . (III 24.9)

*I have partaken fully of Ceridwen's arts, . . .*

Gnawd o'm gwawd gorfod yn amryson . . .  
As gwddant ein dysg ein disgyblion! (III 21.184-7)

*Often through my poetry do I win the contest . . .  
Our apprentices know our learning!*

Rydysgaf disgywen feirddion,  
Ry-m-gedir-y gadair amryson. (IV 6.236-7)

*I train splendid bards,  
I am given the right of his contest chair.*

Cyfodwch, cenwch, cenyf o'm bann,  
A mi, feirdd, i mewn a chwi allan! (III 1.33-4)

*Arise, sing, I will sing with my skill,  
I, bards, will go in, and you will go out.*

Gostwgwyr llys, gostegwch!  
Gosteg, beirdd, bardd a glywch! (IV 10.15-6)

*Court silencers, call for silence!  
Silence, bards: you will hear a true bard!*

Ti hebof, nid hebu oedd tau,  
Mi hebod, ni hebaf innau. (IV 9.172-3).

*You without me, none would speak of you,  
Me without you, I would not speak.*

#### 4. Literary influences:

Pryddestau Cymru, cymrodial – cynnelw,  
Neud Cynddelw a'u cynnal;  
Can am daw anaw anwadal  
Anhyed, cyfred, cyfartal,  
Eurdorchawg a rydd eurdal – im er cerdd,  
A'm ceinion o fual, . . . (IV. t.129)

*The songs of Wales, the regular passions of praise,  
It is Cynddelw that upholds them;  
Since these riches that come to me cannot be held,  
So swiftly gone, so sudden, so precious while they last,  
The one who wears a golden torc gives me payment in gold*

*for my song-craft,  
And my honourable libation from the drinking horn, . . .*

*Y Gododdin:*

Gnawd i fardd fendigaw haelon. (III 10.13)

*It is customary for a bard to bless men of nobility.*

Beird byt barnant wyr o gallon. (Williams, p.12)

*The bards of the world judge men of heart.*

O win cyfrgain nid cyfrgoll,  
O fedd o fuelin oll. (III 17.3-4)

*Splendid wine that benefits all,  
And mead from all the drinking horns.*

O ved o vuelin. (Williams, p.22)

*And mead from drinking horns.*

5.

*from* **Reconciliation with the Lord Rhys**

To one who has the eagle's nature, of Medrawd's custom,  
Neither I nor anyone else can see his equal,  
I saw a lord (an enemy host do not ridicule me),  
In battle a bloody wandering is caused by him;  
I saw an angry, fearless chieftain,  
The terror of his terror visits the opposing force:  
I saw wounding and oppression and great woe,  
The result of a strike by a fierce and steady sword;  
I saw praise-worthy action and a round shield  
and a host of spears  
And bloody cataracts springing from flesh;  
I saw a noble man from the lineage of Anarawd,  
Those that saw him saw a wonder;  
Like a brave man defending his rightful possession,  
Like a warrior he keeps his word.

6. *from* **The Praise-song of Madog ap Maredydd**

- 1 I praise a lord with the nine parts of my art,  
with the ninefold awen, with nine kinds of song;  
I praise a man of Ogrfan's bravery,  
one who is the tumult of the tide as it diggs the shore,  
5 one who is red of spear in a stout, strong force; Cadfan's son is fair.  
This leader of men, vast is his dominion over us.  
Lord of the attack, perfect leader,  
Powerful Madog, knight on the battle field –  
My poetry is not incomplete beneath heaven,  
10 Neither is my song shameful nor powerless by your side.  
Thick about the brave lion, sharer of bright silver,  
is the crowd that surrounds him, full of excitement  
for calends at Solstice time.  
Pilgrim in the safety, in the metalwork of my song-craft.  
15 His song of honour is made fair so that it will not disappear.  
Patron of wanderers, carrying a broken shield,  
I drank in your court, the perfect one of Lles' lineage,  
The honourable drink from the splendid cup,  
From the oxen's golden horn, the horn of the dignified beast.

## 7. An elegy for Madog ap Maredydd, Llywelyn his son and the Powys lineage

1. On the plain of Bryn Actun I praised a hundred men  
With my bloody sword on my hip,  
In one retreat there were three hundred leaders in battle,  
May they all go to heaven together.
  
2. In the plain of Didlystun our braves were of one mind  
Not to obstruct praise for them,  
Every generous man on a speckled, willing steed,  
Every hero with a brave sword on his hip.
  
3. In Maesygroesau we blessed good men,  
Knights on auburn steeds,  
Supplicants traveled to fetch the spoils  
Of generous men with swift, bloody swords.
  
6. None but God and the enchanter of the world  
And accurate seers,  
(The majestic retinue of gold-torqued warriors)  
Know how many we numbered in Afon Rhiwerth.
  
7. Many blue-grey steeds were beside Llanfawr church,  
Lively ones in January,  
And many brave men in battle  
With Llywelyn, poet's benefactor.
  
8. There are many men and steeds in Maesing today –  
A wide, peaceful land –  
And many brave men in the press of battle  
with the chieftain from the lineage of Cadell's men.

9. In Ystrad Llangwm I considered of our braves,  
They considered what I had sung,  
The retinue of noble Madog, protector from violence;  
I saw the retinue of Llywelyn.
  
10. Llywelyn, hero in the attack, possessed  
From Rhug to Buddugre,  
Many knights on frolicsome steeds,  
Many young men along a green hill.
  
11. When we were summoned to Cynwyd Gadfor  
Our council was given,  
Splendid warriors with dented shields,  
Along the pasture we were spread.
  
12. May God not allow any man to live on,  
He caused them to be in two graves,  
Madog died, great sadness to me;  
Llywelyn was killed, total destruction!
  
13. Greetings, Gwaelest Edwy  
And the court beside the banks of the Dyfrdwy,  
A beautiful place akin to a shore  
That made my longing all the greater!
  
14. Greetings to Cwm Brwynog  
And the famous homes and boundaries  
And the place that does not deny a leader  
And the church above Madog's court!

15. Since blessed Madog died  
Not many noblemen are joyous,  
Pitiful is the world as far as I can tell  
And nobility is now derelict.
16. Because the battle hero died  
And because my leader, generous his hand, is not alive,  
If hearts brake from worry  
Mine is now in two pieces.
17. If the generous man of Lles' lineage was alive, Gwynedd's men  
Would not be camped in the heart of Edeirnion  
With men not killed by a war leader,  
The numerous hosts would be food for kites.
18. During Madog's life, no man would dare  
Take a fair border,  
Nor intend to claim either,  
If not by God's hand, any part of the world.

8. **To Madog ap Maredudd's retinue on his death**

4. I hear a great tumult over the land's surface where some labour,  
The object of energetic praise in war,  
The retinue of Madog, highly-praised defence,  
Like the war cry of Arthur's host.
5. I hear a great tumult over the surface of the land that breeds braves,  
Brave Madog owned it,  
One that wins completely on the field of war,  
One of the Three Faithful Retinues.

9. **The Lineages of Powys**

1. I present to you an exultant, skilful praise-song,  
Your Lord presented it to you  
So that you may be joyous,  
Your nobility stems from the battle of Meigen.
  
2. I present to you a praise-song, I ask the permission  
Of armed men, united  
In bitter fighting, in angry battle,  
On the field of slaughter, in the wolf-pack's killing.
  
3. I present to you a praise-song, your gifts support me,  
You that serve gifts to soldiers,  
May God's blessing be with you, princes!  
It is customary for a bard to bless men of nobility.
  
4. I present to you a praise-song, men of Powys who hurl in battle,  
Faithful, tireless men of Argoed;  
My greatness, my fame decrees it,  
My outrages, my passion arouses it.
  
5. I present to you a praise-song, fearless men in battle  
do not deny me your request for another poem.  
The leader of the men of Powys received me with honour,  
He entertained me, he loved me, he would beseech me for a poem.
  
6. I beseech God for a praise-song with the ability to greet  
the splendid number;  
A knight wearing a golden torc, not mean to his steed,  
Is the chieftain of the men of the Lles family retinue.

7. The second great retinue, that give to bards, that honour me,  
Astride splendid steeds, astride splendidly mained steeds,  
Braves of a band in endless conflict,  
Leaders in hardship are the leaders of Cadell's family.
  
8. The third retinue that are unbeatable in a confrontation,  
Angry in the advance, bestowing oppression at length,  
Killers of England's men, fervent killers,  
Is Iorwerth's family scattering the enemy.
  
19. The fourteenth, they are given honour,  
An unfaltering song of praise,  
Warriors that cause harm to their enemies  
Are the family of Cyndrwyn, Cynddelw awards them.
  
20. I give to you an exultant, skilful praise-song,  
Your Lord gave you gifts,  
You are satisfied because you are joyous,  
You favour it, your nobility comes from the battle of Meigien.