

Gwilym Tew

(flourishing 1460-1480)

Gwilym Tew (William the fat or plump) [1] was a descendant of one of the most famous bardic families of Glamorgan and he may have lived in Llangynwyd. He sang to the gentleman of upper Glamorgan and his circuit included Kidwelly, Ewyras and possibly Maelienydd. His period of operations was from about 1460 to 1480. He was a *pencerdd*, which means a chief-of-song, the highest rank among trained professional bards. However, his importance was not due to his poetry but to his attempt in arranging the rules governing the current verse styles. Indeed, this aspect of his work was included by John David Rhys in the Welsh Grammar published in 1592. Gwilym Tew copied older manuscripts, the first bard to be so identified, and owned *Llyfr Aneirin*, the Book of Aneirin. His holograph manuscript Peniarth 51 included Welsh poems, one of which is below, and various tracts, including a copy of the bardic grammar.

Awdl i ofyn march dros Harri Stradling i Harri Ddu o Euas, [2] ***An Awdl asking for a stallion, on behalf of Harri Stradling from Harri Ddu of Euas / Ewyras [3]***

Ilyma odl I erchi keffyl dros Syr Harri Ystradlin *Here is an ode requesting a horse on behalf of Sir Harri Stradling*
i Harri Ddu o Euas *from Harri Ddu of Euas*

Tecaf gwlad a ga'd i gael – pob urddas *The fairest land to be found for the bards*
I'r beirddion ei gafael; *To receive every dignity;*
Treiglais i, lle bu'r Trihael, *I walked, where once (lived) the Tri Hael [i],*
Tir Euas hwnt at Rys hael. *The land of Euas yonder towards generous Rhys.*

Haelaf a nesaf ei nasiwn – grymus *Of Britons the most generous nearest his powerful line*
I Frutus o Frytwn; *To Brutus;*
Haelaf, pyburaf barwn, *Most generous, brightest baron,*
Harri Ddu, herwydd a wn. *(Is he) Harri Ddu, according to what I know.*

Da'i gwn lle hwyliwn, gwehelyth – gwiwddyn, *Well do I know it, where I journey, (he of) a fitting*
Rhoi Gwyddel ar esyth; *(noble)man's lineage,*
Da'r gwrda, ni fetha fyth, *That he impales an Irishman on spears;*
Diargyswr, dewr gwaewsyth. *He is a good lord, he never fails,*
 (A) bold and brave man, with a straight spear.

Sythaf a gwrddaf mewn gorddwy – o'm iaith, *Most upright and mighty of my nation in battle,*
Ail Math mab Mathonwy; *Second (only) to Math fab Mathonwy;*
Sêl a Llyfr Manwel Mynwy; *The seal and Manual Book of Monmouth; [ii]*
Swch Gwent, ac Euas Uwch Gwy. *(And) the plough-share of Gwent, and Euas above / over (the*
 River)

Wye.

Uwch Gwy mae'n ddeufwy, o Ddyfi – yma, *(In) Uwch Gwy he is twice as exalted, from Dyfi hence,*
Hyd ymyl Caerffili; *To the borders of Caerffili / Caerphilly;*
Ni thry neb ein hathro ni, *No one shall turn our teacher,*

Ni thyr ar a wnaeth Harri.	<i>That which Harri made shall not be broken.</i>
Ni bu in Harri neb un hired Yn wisgo eurliw nac ysgarled; Ni bu'n oes hoywlu yn dwyn saeled - wen Ar guoedd yr ên w'r gy' ddewred.	<i>Compared to our Harri there was none as tall Dressed in gold colour and scarlet; Never in our time has a fine host borne a white sallet On the ?sides of the chin as valiantly as this man. [iii]</i>
Ni bu arall call, heb gael colled, Yn goddeithio Ffrainc yn gy' ddoethed, Â'r synnwyr (cadarn cyd synied) - â'r blawdd; Ar fwriad anhawdd - Ef yw'r Dwned!	<i>No one else of sound mind has burnt France As wisely (as he), without (suffering) loss(es), With the skill (firm agreement), - with the tumult; In a difficult enterprise - he is the Dwned. [iv]</i>
Rhwydd yw gan eryr, (- rodd gynired -), - Roi meirch ar frasegirch mewn brywsgeid, A rhoddi i'r meiri, cymered - pawb wyrdd, A rhoddi i filfyRDD rudd a felfed.	<i>It is (an) easy (task) for a gift-bearing eagle, To give horses fed with rich oats in their brisket, And to give (them) to the stewards, let everyone take the green cloth, And to give to (the) myriad millions crimson and velvet.</i>
Harri wyf finnau, hir ei fwed, Haelwin, Ystradlin, brins dirydlled.	<i>I am Harri, long (is) his mwed (?gentleness), [v] Generous (with his) wine, (of the line of) Stradling, prince (who is) untarnished. [vi]</i>
Heddiw i harchaf, lle'n gwahodded, Y nail o ddeufarch, myn llaw Ddyfed! Er du rhyngyngog, cyn daled - ar fryn, Er minwyn melyn a ganmoled.	<i>Today I ask, where we were invited, (For) one of two horses, by the hand of Dyfed! [vii] For the ambling black (one), (he who is) so tall - on (the) hill, [viii] For (the) yellow white-rimmed (one) who is praised.</i>
Gwewyr a'm lladdodd, awgrym lludded - Gorwydd o Euas ym bair gwared! Gwraidd yw Harri, lys agored, A gwr o unach gorau 'aned. O'i gyfrwy uwch Gwy, awch ged - gwlad Forgan,	<i>Spears have killed me, a sign of fatigue - A steed from Euas shall deliver me from harm! Harri is manly, (in his) open court, And a man of the best lineage who was ever born. On his saddle (in) Uwch Gwy, ardour (of the) gift - (of the) land of</i>
<i>Morgan,</i> Y carw o anian, e'i carodd!	<i>(He) of the stag's temperament, he has been crowned!</i>
Amler ysgwier (na wosgoëd!) Archaf a phyllaf ym, na phalled Ei ffo, rhag Gwyddyl, (ffeiriau codded), O'r wledd i'r llechwedd fal y lleched I ddwyn rhian fwyn i fyned - fal hydd - I giliaw dan wÿdd rhag ein gweled.	<i>I ask and ?pyllaf (meaning uncertain) the ambling horse [ix] Of the squire (do not avoid him!), (and) may his flight Never falter, from the Irish (fairs of vexation), From the feast to the slope (he moves) like lightning To carry a fair maiden, to go (yonder) -like a stag - To hide under the trees so that we may not be seen.</i>
Bwy le yn Nwywent abl eniwed? Bwy le yng Nghymru fry afrifed? <i>above?</i> Bwy ynys dywys er ei daëd? Bwy le ond Euas o'i blaen dawed? Bwy Sir o nawtir neitied - dros glwydau?	<i>In which place in Dwywent is there great harm? [x] In which place in Wales are there innumerable (?horses) Which island will he lead however good it is? Where but Euas is as silent its cofines? [xi] In which shire among the nine shires will he jump - over</i>

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Bwy artal y mae mae march cyn berted?	<i>In which district is there a horse as beautiful (as his)?</i>
Ni bu un gorwydd cyn gyf'rwydded, Na llew o geirddawn well o gerdded; Ond arall a fu fal march Dared, O'r un rhigun i Urien Rheged, Pan fu rhwng deulu (daled – yn y rest), Ymwan am orchest er mwyn marched.	<i>Never was there a steed as skilled (as he), Nor a lion of skilful speech with a better gait; But another there was like Dared's horse, Of the same ?condition (which belonged) to Urien Rheged, When two hosts (so tall - in the spear-rest) Jousted for excellence for the sake of women. [xii]</i>
Nid aeth o'i flaen saeth, er ei sythed, I mewn ar orallt maenor waered, Na helynt y gwynt, nid cyn gynted, Na gleisiad afon o glais Dyfed, Na hwyl aderyn a hed – dros goedydd, Na hydd ar fynydd cyn fuaned.	<i>He was (never outrun) by an arrow, despite its straightness, Into a slope down to (a) manor, Nor (by) the course of the wind, not as quick (as he), Nor (by the) young river salmon from (a) stream (in) Dyfed, Nor (by the) journey of a bird that flies – over trees, Nor (by the) stag on a mountain, so swift (is he).</i>
Mae fo'n ddi-dramgwydd, er ebrwydded-; O bu ddi ramgwydd gorwydd gared. Â'r hwn (os dwetwn) cyn wastoted, Hoff o'i ddawn – ei ddawn at f'eidduned! Ni chawn, teg ei rawn, trwy gred – o pallai,	<i>He is sure-footed, despite being so swift-; If he were sure-footed the steed was loved. And with this (man) (if I may say), as constant as he, (I am) fond of his talent – his talent towards my desire! I would not receive throughout Christendom, if he were to refuse, (he with) horse hair (so)</i>
<i>fair,</i> Hacnai a'm dycai yn gyn deced.	<i>A hackney (horse) that would carry me as fairly (as he).</i>

[i] The Three Generous Men of Britain, see *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, edited Rachel Bromwich.

[ii] *Manual Book* is used metaphorically, in the sense of 'exemplar'. The *Manual Book* was the *compotus manualis*, a metrical handbook of rules for calculating astronomical events and the movable dates of the calendar.

[iii] The cynghanedd is faulty in this line.

[iv] The bardic grammar (Donatus). Here metaphorically in the sense of teacher or instructor.

[v] *mwne*d might, just possibly, be a mutated form of *bwne*d (English *bonnet*). OED records 'A cap of mail, a kind of helmet' as one of the old meanings of *bonnet*.

[vi] Probably derived from *dirydled*, literally 'without rust'. The meaning would be untarnished.

[vii] This line should read: *Y naill o ddeufarch....*

[viii] This line should read: *Er du rhygyngog....*

[ix] The meaning of *pyllaf* is uncertain.

[x] Dwywent: the two commotes of Gwent, namely Gwent Is Coed and Gwent Uwch Coed.

[xi] This line is not clear in the manuscript.

[xii] *merched* instead of *marched* makes more sense here.

References

1. Biographical sources: Dictionary of Welsh National Biography.
2. Anne Elizabeth Jones (1980) *Gwilym Tew: astudiaeth destunol a chymharol o'i lawysgrif, Peniarth 51, ynghyd ag ymdriniaeth a'i farddoniaeth* (Gwilym Tew: a comparative study of the

text of his manuscript, Peniarth 51, dealing with his poetry therein), PhD thesis, University of Wales. This poem is Gw 452.

3. Translation and copyright Eurig Salisbury.