

# 1. Introduction

This is a study born from personal interest in the culture, language and history of the area around Caerwedros, Llwyndafydd, Plwmp and Rhydlewys in Ceredigion. There is a rich modern heritage of poetry and writing in the area with authors such as the Bois y Cilie, T.Llew Jones and Dic Jones<sup>1</sup> merging with thriving current groups skilled in the art of writing strict metre poetry. Reading an M.Phil thesis by a neighbour that describes the history of the landscape in the commote of late medieval Caerwedros (Morgan, 2014), begged the question of whether a similar investigation could be tried for poetry? Was strict metre poetry as vibrant in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries as it is in this area now?

The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries show evidence of a busy circuit of poetic patronage in the area. This was a period of dramatic change in society paralleled by interesting developments in poetry, with plenty of scope to explore material relevant to this part of Ceredigion. Before this period the earlier manuscript evidence is mostly focused on the poets of the Welsh princes and their households (J.E.C Williams, 1994).<sup>2</sup>

There is a rich vein of material reporting on this heritage mostly in articles and books in Welsh. What might be useful would be to collect and summarise this material in one place in a format accessible to readers starting in the medium of English with an appetite to explore the richness of medieval poetry in Welsh.

The aim is to assemble a collection of information about the poetry composed for people and about places associated with southern Ceredigion during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The material is assembled in a way that will make it straightforward to transfer into a digital format accessible through the internet. Here in the printed medium one accesses the material through the name of the poet; digitally it will be possible to search using place names, patron name, poet and other terms.<sup>3</sup>

In this case the research questions are better posed as tasks: 1. The dissertation will sift and collect the diverse sets of materials and information relating to the poetry of this time and area into an accessible and coherent whole. 2. This material will be organised in a way that makes information about the poems and poets of southern Ceredigion in the 14th and 15th centuries accessible as a starting point for others with an interest in this area and its poetry.

Perhaps the last most significant study of the medieval poetry of Ceredigion was an M.A. dissertation completed in the medium of Welsh by D.H. Roberts 1969.<sup>4</sup> Roberts collated most of the known works composed for families of Ceredigion who sponsored poetry in the period following the demise of the Welsh princes in the late 13th century. This work provided the springboard for the research of this project. The fulcrum of this study is the poet rather than the patron. The area to be studied is limited to southern Ceredigion.<sup>5</sup>

Restricting the geographical area of research kept the scope manageable yet offers room for expansion to the whole of Ceredigion later. The dissertation addresses some fifty poems by ten poets. The analysis affirms how this small corner of Wales attracted significant poetic talent and activity in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The significance of this research is the bringing together of materials from diverse and sometimes less accessible sources into one place, and then presenting it in a way that makes it a potential starting place for others to learn about the work of these extraordinary people. Where translations of the poems are available these are included, otherwise the author offers an interpretation of the text and encourages the reader to explore on their own.

All of the poets discussed entertained patrons on a circuit beyond south Ceredigion. However, three of them appear to have spent a significant amount of time in the area: Dafydd Nanmor, Deio ap Ieuan Du and Lewys Glyn Cothi. Their works account for forty of the fifty poems included, these will be considered first, followed by the remaining seven poets in chronological order.

Each chapter discussing a poet is designed to stand alone as an article on a website<sup>6</sup>. This means that a list of references is included at the end of each chapter in addition to the bibliographical references at the end. A glossary of terms used is included in the appendices (See p. 109), this will be linked to the *Geriadur Prifysgol Cymru* on the web site.

The dissertation begins with a short summary that places the poetry in the context of the period.

## References

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Conran, T. (1986), *Welsh Verse*, Southampton: Camelot Press.

Morgan, G. (2014), *A Study of the Medieval Landscape of the Commote of Caerwedros* (M.Phil, Prifysgol Aberystwyth).

Williams, J.E.C. (1994), *The Poets of the Welsh Princes*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> [Dictionary of Welsh Biography Teulu Cilie](#), [Dictionary of Welsh Biography T.Llew.Jones](#), [Dictionary of Welsh Biography Dic Jones](#)

<sup>2</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> century marked the coming of the Tudors with Henry VII emerging triumphant from the wars of the Roses. This marks the end of the scope of this dissertation, for the simple reason of keeping the scope manageable and because the patterns of poetic practice begin to change again in this period.

<sup>3</sup> The appendices demonstrate the availability of this material in spreadsheet format - ready for transfer to an online database.

<sup>4</sup> See also Robert's article (1968), summarising his dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> Southern Ceredigion - corresponds to everywhere south of the river Aeron and north of the river Teifi, effectively the commotes of Is-Coed, Gwyrionydd, Caerwedros and Mabwynion. In modern Ceredigion including everywhere south of the road that goes between Aberaeron and Lampeter with the addition of the small area to the north of Lampeter.

<sup>6</sup> The length of the dissertation exceeds the usual for an M.A because its scope includes ten poets and over fifty poems associated with southern Ceredigion aimed at being a source material on a website. The references at the end of each chapter and some minor duplication enables the material on a specific poet to stand-alone.