

THE GUTUN OWAIN FORUM

14 May, 2016

*Daw dy awr, a chyda hyn
Fe gei eto fyw, Gutun.*

Gruffudd Antur

We are extremely fortunate that the sun always shines for our annual *Beirdd yr Uchelwyr* forum, and Saturday 14 May this year was no exception!

The focus of our attention this year was the fifteenth-century polymath, Gutun Owain, who had strong links with Valle Crucis abbey in Llangollen. Six speakers were invited to talk about aspects of his various interests. Here follows a summary of the papers, in the order that they were presented.

The astrological texts in Gutun Owain's hand were the subject of an interesting paper by **Dr Diana Luft** (CAWCS). She paid particular attention to his Book of Fortune, a text which discusses such matters as the perils that face those who are born under particular signs of the Zodiac or during the dominance of certain planets. Dr Luft explained that such texts, which were common in the Middle Ages, represent an attempt by the medieval mind to make sense of the physical world.

Gruffudd Antur (Bangor University) gave us an exciting paper in which he built a strong case for identifying Guto'r Glyn's father with a certain Siancyn ap Gwilym of Crogeniddon in Traean y Glyn (an area in Nanheudwy which included Chirk). He suggested that this was the *Glyn* that Guto adopted as part of his name. We were shown a historical document which proved that Siancyn ap Gwilym, like his son, was an archer.

Daniel Huws (Penrhyn-coch) gave us a very useful conspectus of Gutun Owain's manuscripts (including a few which have now been lost). He showed us how very varied Gutun's interests were, including genealogy, heraldry, religion, astrological and medical texts, historical texts and grammar. He worked mainly at Valle Crucis abbey, where he most probably received his education.

Dr Jenny Day (CAWCS) turned our attention to the copy of *The Life of Saint Martin* copied by Gutun Owain in his NLW LIGC 3026C [= Mostyn 88]. The translator of the text is likely to have been John Trevor of Bryncunallt, Chirk, and later of Pentre Kenrick in the parish of St Martins: both Gutun Owain and Guto'r Glyn testified to his scholarly abilities in their poems to him. Dr Day, who is presently working on a new edition of *The Life of Saint Martin*, noted several interesting aspects of John Trevor's translation, showing us how he would sometimes translate incorrectly due to his misunderstanding of the Latin original, or at other times how he would adapt the text for his Welsh audience.

Professor Ann Parry Owen scrutinized one of the poets' lesser known metres, namely the *tawddgyrch cadwynog*, a highly complicated metre devised by the grammarian Einion Offeiriad at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and subsequently standardized and made more challenging by Dafydd ab Edmwnd at Carmarthen Eisteddfod, c.1451. Her aim was to see how much light such a study of the development of a particular metre could provide us on the relations between the poets and the extent of their influence.

In the final paper of the day, **Ben Guy** (Cambridge University) discussed Gutun Owain's genealogies. He showed how much Gutun Owain developed as an editor and copyist during his forty-year-long career – from the young and enthusiastic worker at the beginning of his career in 1455/6, producing rather untidy pages with blanks to be filled in later, to the mature and careful copyist of 1497, when he produced the carefully presented genealogies in Rylands Welsh 1.



(from the left) Ben Guy, Diana Luft, Daniel Huws, Dafydd Johnston, Jenny Day, Ann Parry Owen and Gruffudd Antur