

Hector Munro Chadwick (1870-1947) was Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Cambridge from 1912 to 1941. Through the immense range of his scholarly publications, and through the vigorous enthusiasm which he brought to all aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies — philological and literary, historical and archaeological — he helped to define the field and to give it the interdisciplinary orientation which characterises it still. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, which owes its existence and its own interdisciplinary outlook to H.M. Chadwick, has wished to commemorate his enduring contribution to Anglo-Saxon studies by establishing an annual series of lectures in his name.

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First published 2000 by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic,
9 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DP, England.

ISBN 978-0-9532697-2-3 / 0 9532697 2 8

ISSN 0962-0702

Reprinted by the Reprographics Centre, University of Cambridge.

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MARGED HAYCOCK

‘Where cider ends, there ale begins to reign’:
drink in medieval Welsh poetry



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

‘Where cider ends, there ale begins to reign’: drink in medieval Welsh poetry

MARGED HAYCOCK

As an old Asnac, older even than the term¹ but at the younger end of the period which produced David Dumville, Oliver Padel and Simon Keynes, it gives me great pleasure to be back again in the Department which meant so much to me. I remember with affection and gratitude the teaching of Rachel Bromwich, Kathleen Hughes and Peter Hunter Blair, as well as Peter Clemoes, Raymond Page, and Michael Lapidge. But I have long since been assimilated to the Cambrian sub-species of Asnac, and Welsh material will be my main concern this evening.

The tenth anniversary of the H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lecture calls for something with some festive potential, just as the institution of the series moved Professor Donald Bullough to deal with aspects of ‘ceremonial and indulgent drinking’ in Germanic societies.² As I turn to strong drink I am aware that I may be upsetting gender and racial expectations, but I take heart from the fact that the side had already been let down at an early date by the ‘stupid drunken maidservant’ in Riddle 12 of the Exeter Book. I gather that this dark-haired Welshwoman has the distinction of being the only female drunk in Old English poetry, and a solitary

¹ According to Peter Clemoes, the term was coined by Anthony Harvey *c.* 1980.

² D. A. Bullough, *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-drinkers: Aspects of Community and Conflict in the Early Medieval West*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lecture 1 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 25.

drinker too.³ She was an easy target, like the Continental Celts castigated by the Classical writers for their unseemly craving for unmixed wine, their ‘wits dulled by continual drunkenness’. Fortunately, the anthropologists have taught us to see such reports for what they are: typical reflexes of a ‘them’ and ‘us’ situation, barbarian grain meets civilized grape.⁴ So the Welsh, always alive to a racial slur, even from so far back in time, can relax again.

Or can they? Drink — and food for that matter — has not really been on the agenda for medieval literary scholars in Wales in the way it has long been elsewhere.⁵ I shall not pander to another stereotype by suggesting we all still sign the Pledge or belong to the Band of Hope. Nevertheless it is still true that until

³ *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. Craig Williamson (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1977), no. 10 (Krapp-Dobbie, no. 12); Hugh Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites: Food and Drink and their Consumption in Old English and Related Literature* (Dublin, 1999), p. 21.

⁴ Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 166–70. Giraldus Cambrensis makes a proper distinction between institutionalised licence and everyday behaviour: although guests ‘like wolves and eagles’ ‘lose all control of themselves and insist on being served with vast quantities of food and more especially intoxicating drink’, the Welsh are normally ‘given neither to gluttony nor to drunkenness’: *Descriptio Cambriae* II, 5 and I, 9. It was surely in self-defence that a late-thirteenth-century prior of Brecon, accused of drunkenness by an official visitor, claimed that it was customary when entertaining Welsh guests to make a pretence of getting drunk: F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066–1349* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 204.

⁵ An important exception is D. J. Bowen’s pioneering work, on which I have drawn extensively: ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym a’r Trefydd Drwg’, *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* 10 (1977), 190–220, at 209–18, (on taverns and inns); ‘Beirdd a Noddwyr y Bymthegfed Ganrif’, *Llên Cymru* 18 (1994–5), 53–89 and 221–57, at 82–5 (on taverns); 19 (1996), 1–28, at 15–18 (on food and drink). On food, see also Enid Roberts’ selections: *Bwyd y Beirdd 1400–1600* (Bangor, 1976); *Food of the Bards 1350–1650* (Cardiff, 1982). More general works include: Bobby Freeman, *First Catch your Peacock* (revised edition, Tal-y-bont, 1996); Elfyn Scourfield, *Macsu Cwrw yn Nyfed* (Cardiff, 1983); and Brian Glover, *Prince of Ales: The History of Brewing in Wales* (Stroud, 1993) (generously sponsored by Welsh Brewers Ltd!).

fairly recently the majority of Welsh literary scholars were the product of the chapel and its culture of temperance, what Welsh sociologists used to call Lifestyle A — *Buchedd A* — virtuous and self-denying, rather than Lifestyle B, prodigal, feckless, and down the pub.⁶ Lifestyle A scholars were not minded to claim any expertise or experience in the field, and may have been reluctant to sully the Welsh tradition by drawing attention to its considerable alcoholic content, being only too aware of the poets and gifted poet-scholars who had been destroyed by drink or drugs: Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd), the clergyman who had first brought *The Gododdin* to the wider public in 1764, Iolo Morganwg and his laudunum-inspired forgeries, and their equally gifted contemporary, Goronwy Owen, who, like Dylan Thomas in our own time, died far away in America, the one 46 years old, the other not yet 40.

The green light for the Epicurean and the aspiring home drinker had nevertheless been given by the dramatist and critic, Saunders Lewis, son of the manse but a convert to Roman Catholicism. He was the first to write with appreciation, from the mid-1920s, on the ‘good life’ as portrayed by the professional praise poets.⁷ In critical works and personal letters he was fond of provocative bibulous metaphors, just as he chose to appear defiantly glass-in-hand in official photographs. He rounded on the Nonconformity of his fathers⁸ which had suppressed many sorts

⁶ Terms used by the anthropologist, David Jenkins, in his description of Aberporth, Cardiganshire: *Welsh Rural Communities*, ed. Elwyn Davies and Alwyn D. Rees (Cardiff, 1960), pp. 1–63 at 12–23. They passed into common usage in the sixties and seventies. More recently, historians and sociologists have questioned the validity of the *buchedd* thesis.

⁷ ‘Dafydd Nanmor’, *Y Llenor* 4 (1925), 135–48 (reprinted in *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, ed. R. Geraint Gruffydd (Caerdydd, 1973), pp. 80–92); *Braslun o Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1932), pp. 117–21.

⁸ In 1921 Lewis visited Lledrod in Cardiganshire hoping to see the grave of Evan Evans and to drink ale at the inn. He found that no-one, including the vicar, knew the whereabouts of the grave; the inn had been closed and turned

of drink-related activities, wassailing, dancing, and songs in praise of tobacco and beer.⁹

I do not wish to linger lovingly with the young Saunders Lewis over lists of wines on offer in the homes of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century patrons:¹⁰ the dulcet and claret, Muscatel and Malmsey, wine shipped in from Bordeaux and La Rochelle (*gwin Bordios, a gwin Rhosiel*), and the wines of Spain and Speyer on the Rhine (*gwin Ysbaen a gwin Ysbir*).¹¹ Such names

into a temperance house: ‘I cursed the teetotal, tradition-forgetful people of Lledrod, and I hope they all go to Hell’ (*Letters to Margaret Gilcriest*, ed. Mair Saunders Jones and others (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 442–43).

⁹ Seasonal customs involving drink are discussed by T. Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk-Custom* (London, 1930), pp. 145–64; Rhiannon Ifans, *Sêrs a Rybana* (Llandysul, 1983); W. R. Lambert, *Drink and Sobriety in Victorian Wales c. 1820 – c. 1895* (Cardiff, 1983), pp. 7–13. See also *Hen Benillion*, ed. T. H. Parry-Williams (Llandysul, 1940), pp. 59–67.

¹⁰ During the period 1928–1932, mouth-watering holiday communications to his wife, at home with their young daughter, arrived from Angers, Beaune, Saumur, Sancerre, and Bordeaux. The evocative political essay, ‘Weobley and St. Emilion’, was published in 1930: see *Canlyn Arthur* (Aberystwyth, 1938), pp. 41–5, and the translation by Meic Stephens, *An Anthology of Welsh Short Prose* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 25–8.

¹¹ From the list in the praise *cywydd* to Tomas ap Phylib and his wife Siân, the heiress of Picton Castle in Pembrokeshire: *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Caerdydd, 1995) [GLGC], no. 91, lines 57 and 59. Also mentioned are ‘two kinds of muscatel’, and wine shipped from Bayonne, Normandy and Brittany. There are many lists of types, vintages and wine-ports in fifteenth-century praise poems: e.g. GLGC no 73, lines 37–49; wines from Alsace, Burgundy and the unidentified ‘island of Opia’ (?Ethiopia), and the improbable ‘Denmark wine’, in Tudur Aled’s praise of Dafydd ab Owain, abbot of Strata Marcella (*Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. T. Gwynn Jones, 2 volumes (Caerdydd, 1926), vol. I, poem 3, lines 29–62, discussed by Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962), pp. 379–80); the wines favoured by Morys, abbot of Whitland (including St Emilion, *Sain Miliwn*: GLGC no. 65, line 59); and wines from Anjou, Maine, Lisbon, the Rhine, and elsewhere in Hywel Swrdwal’s ode to William Herbert (*Gwaith Barddonol Howel Swrdwal a’i Fab Ieuan*, ed. J. C. Morrice (Bangor, 1908), pp. 11–13, discussed by K. Lloyd Gruffydd, ‘Wales’ Maritime Trade in Wine during the Later Middle Ages’, *Maritime Wales* 15 (1992), 7–42, at 23, n. 86.

offered exotic metrical possibilities to the poets as well as a handy way of portraying the patron as a generous *Feinschmecker*. Nor can I tackle the actuality of the wine-trade, interesting though it is to learn from Adam of Usk that the household of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd Fychan of Caerwyn consumed 16 tuns of wine each year (4032 gallons!), or to know how much Gascon wine Gruffudd Dwnn, a veteran of Agincourt and the siege of Harfleur, was importing into Carmarthen in his ship ‘Le George’ between 1430 and 1435.¹² My interest is more in the literary uses of drink. There is a mass of material, perhaps more than in most western vernacular traditions: drinks and drinking are in thousands of poems, sometimes with an absolutely central function, as in the Old Welsh poem, *The Gododdin*, and in later warband or *Männerbund* celebrations.¹³ The provision of drink remains a key

Gruffydd emphasises that most of the wine imported was from Gascony, and that Iberian vintages become common from the mid-fifteenth century (*ibid.*, pp. 7, 10–11). For further references, see J. Lloyd-Jones, *Geirfa Barddoniaeth Gynnar Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1931–63), pp. 680–1. A more pedestrian technique for suggesting the variety and plenitude of drink was to list officials who were charged with the provision of hospitality — cooks, butlers, cellarers, ale-brewers, stewards, etc.: e.g. GLGC no. 17, lines 25–30.

¹² *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, ed. and trans. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), pp. 144–5 (which describes his execution in 1401 in the presence of Henry IV for his part in the Glyn Dŵr revolt); Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1972), p. 201. Both are noted by Bowen, ‘Beirdd a Noddwyr’, pp. 17–18. There is a wealth of detail in Gruffydd, ‘Maritime Trade’, *passim*.

¹³ Such as the mid-twelfth-century ‘Hirlas Owain’, attributed to the Powys prince, Owain Cyfeiliog: ed. Gruffydd Aled Williams in *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, ed. Kathleen A. Bramley and others, *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion II* (Caerdydd, 1994), 221–52. The possibility that Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr was the poet is further canvassed by Professor Williams in ‘Owain Cyfeiliog: Bardd-dywysog?’, in *Beirdd a Thywysogion: Barddoniaeth Llys yng Nghymru, Iwerddon a’r Alban cyflwynedig i R. Geraint Gruffydd*, ed. B. F. Roberts & M. E. Owen (Caerdydd ac Aberystwyth, 1996), pp. 180–201. See also *idem*, ‘The Feasting Aspects of

component of the ideal patron right through until the mid-seventeenth century and the final demise of the professional bardic order.¹⁴

But first a word about the drinks: mead, wine, bragget and ale. Mead was certainly the top drink in literature, with wine a close second. There does *not* seem to have been a distinct ‘short’ drink of more ‘impressive’ potency like the Anglo-Saxon *beor*, a sweet fruit-based honey drink which may have reached a strength of up to 18%.¹⁵ Distilled drinks appear somewhat later than in Ireland: only in the fifteenth century do *aqua vitae* and so on start to turn up, in love poetry.¹⁶ In the Welsh law-texts one tub of mead is equated with four tubs of ale, and bragget stands mid-way between the two.¹⁷ The king on his rounds of the realm would be

Hirlas Owein, in *Ildánach Ildirech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, ed. John Carey and others (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), pp. 289–302.

¹⁴ Food at the feast is virtually absent from praise poetry (though not the prose tales) before the fourteenth century. References to animal fodder and the feasting of birds and beasts of prey (together with condemnations of gluttony in religious and satirical verse) suggest that the early Welsh poets, like their Old English neighbours, regarded eating as a base bodily necessity which connected humans with the animal world: Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites*, pp. 11–12, 41, 51–65. Changing attitudes to food are beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁵ Christine E. Fell, ‘Old English *Beor*’, *Leeds Studies in English*, NS 8 (1975), 76–95, at 90.

¹⁶ See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru / A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Caerdydd, 1950–) [GPC] s.v. *acwafeti*.

¹⁷ *Llyfr Iorwerth*, ed. Aled Rhys Wiliam (Cardiff, 1960), p. 63; *The Law of Hywel Dda*, transl. and ed. Dafydd Jenkins (Llandysul, 1986), p. 126. *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 13, for a full vessel of beer equated with a half of bragget and a third of mead. The comparative status of the drinks is also indicated in the Cyfnerth texts: ‘from a townland with the office of maer or cynghellor, mead is paid. From a free townland without office, bragget is paid. From a villein townland, beer’: *Welsh Medieval Law*, ed. A. W. Wade-Evans (Oxford, 1909), p. 56; Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p. 129.

feasted with mead by the local land-owning nobles,¹⁸ and at court the mead-brewer would be on hand as one of the officers pertaining to the King.¹⁹ It does not seem that we are dealing necessarily with ‘an archaic and ritual drink’ or a ‘nostalgic fiction’ as has been suggested may have been the case for mead in Anglo-Saxon poetry.²⁰ The drink hierarchy is indicated in various ways by the later poets: as a marker of ages, for example. The patron Henri ab Ieuan Fychan of Llansanffraid-yn-Elfael (Radnorshire) dispensed ‘gold coin, horses, saddles and mead’ on reaching maturity. In his youth he had offered merely ale (admittedly the ale from Weobley in Herefordshire, later to be praised in Camden’s *Britannia*).²¹

Wine is not mentioned at all in the law texts because their concern is with regularly available home produce. But there are plenty of literary references: just ‘wine’ usually. ‘White wine’ occurs once only in the early poetry in a description of the Otherworld, *Caer Sidi*, with its wondrous fountain of drink sweeter even than ‘white wine’.²² Named varieties and types of wines start to appear in the fourteenth century and proliferate in

¹⁸ On food-renders (*gwestfa*, owed by land-owning nobles; and *dawnbwyd*, owed by bondmen), see T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Welsh and Irish Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 370–400.

¹⁹ *Llyfr Iorwerth*, p. 12; Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp. 23–4.

²⁰ Fell, ‘*Beor*’, p. 80; on the evidence of the food-rents, p. 81. Documentary as opposed to literary evidence for Welsh mead in the *later* Middle Ages requires further investigation.

²¹ GLGC no. 156, lines 35–8; the poet enjoys his status as ‘a foster-son of honey’ (*yn fab maeth mêl*, line 23). Further references to Weobley ale are listed in Haycock, “‘Canu y Cwrw’ o Lyfr Taliesin”, *Dwned* 4 (1998), 9–32, at 13, n. 13. *Camden’s Britannia*, ed. Edmund Gibson (London, 1695), col. 577.

²² *Ar ffynhawn ffrwythlaw yn yssyd oduchtî, / Ys whegach nor gwin gwyn y llyn yndi*: J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), p. 34, lines 11–12.

the following century, as we have seen. There are occasional references to Welsh vineyards.²³

Bragget next. This is Welsh *bragawd* made from *brag* ‘malt’ but with honey — a half-way house between mead and ale. The recipe and the name had been taken to Ireland at least by the tenth century when the British loan-word *bragóit* is discussed in Cormac’s Glossary.²⁴ The name was borrowed later into Middle English. This brings us to what the Anglo-Saxon charters and

²³ *Guinlann* ‘vineyard’ (and later, ‘thicket, grove’, as in some northern place-names: see *GPC*) occurs in the Cambridge Juvencus glosses: J. Loth, *Vocabulaire Vieux-Breton* (Paris, 1884), p. 139. In the late fourteenth century, according to Iolo Goch, Owain Glyn Dŵr’s residence at Sycharth (six miles south-west of Oswestry) included an orchard and a vineyard (*Perllan, gwinllan ger gwenllys: Gwaith Iolo Goch*, ed. D. R. Johnston (Caerdydd, 1988), no. 10, line 56), as did Collfryn, home of the fifteenth-century patron, Gruffudd Fychan, in the commote of Deuddwr, south of Llansanffraid-ym-Mechain (*Carw gwenllys, caer a gwinllan, / Y Collfryn glwys, benrhyn glân: Gwaith Hywel Cilan*, ed. Islwyn Jones (Caerdydd, 1963), no. 1, lines 7–8). The same collocation with *gwenllys* occurs (as it does of Heaven in religious poetry) in a *cywydd* in praise of Morgan ap Rhys of Llandeilo Fawr (Carmarthenshire): GLGC no. 34, line 2. Compare also *Perllan a gwinllan i gyd* (at Valle Crucis): *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 117, line 24. The sites mentioned are in relatively sheltered areas, and the references may be more than poetic figures drawing on the *locus amoenus* tradition. Gruffydd, ‘Maritime Trade’, p. 7, notes that in 1487 it was claimed that grapes did not grow in Wales (citing *Calendar of Papal Registers: Letters 1485–92*, p. 197). Local tradition has it that monks of Dore grew vines on their lands in Gwenddwr (Cantref Selyf, Breconshire): David H. Williams, *White Monks in Gwent and the Border* (Pontypool, 1976), pp. 37–8. It may be, as Camden suggested, that notwithstanding the excellent vineyards of Gloucestershire, vines in Britain were generally grown ‘more for shade than fruit’ (*Britannia*, cols. 231 and 123). On the fortunes of more recent Welsh viticulture, including the third Marquess of Bute’s enterprises at Castell Coch (Glamorgan) from the 1870s, see A. A. Pettigrew, ‘Welsh Vineyards’, *Transactions of the Cardiff Naturalists’ Society* 59 (1926), 25–34; Carson I. A. Ritchie, ‘Welsh Wines: a Promise Unfulfilled?’ *Planet* 84 (1990/91), 78–82.

²⁴ Paul Russell, ‘Brittonic Words in Irish Glossaries’, in *Hispano-Gallo-Brittonica: Essays in Honour of Professor D. Ellis Evans*, ed. Joseph F. Eska and others (Cardiff, 1995), pp. 166–82, at 173 and 175; Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 334–5.

medical texts called ‘Welsh ale’ — ‘sweet’, and clearly a ‘Welsh type’ of beverage rather than an export drink.²⁵ It was evidently stronger than ordinary *ealu* and it may have been our bragget. *Lacnunga* recommended its use in infusions for foot swelling and bronchial complaints, not to mention pains in the behind and in the neck.²⁶

Ale was *cwrf* or *cwrwf*, later *cwrw*, an unhopped, simple staple, usually made on the premises — variously yellow, black, brown, or ‘like rowanberries’, tinged with amber or red.²⁷ Certain centres were renowned for their ale: Weobley in Herefordshire has already been mentioned, but Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Conway, and especially Carmarthen were also notable for their special brews.²⁸ We need not linger with water on this festive occasion, only concur with Lewys Glyn Cothi that he who drank water was a wretch, a non-man (*Aflawenydd fal anwr/ a fo i’r dyn yfo’r dŵr*)²⁹ — penitents, watermen saints, and the like. As for churls’ milksops, we may note that whey (*maidd*) is the favoured anti-drink throughout the medieval period for metrical reasons, to contrast with *medd* ‘mead’.

And finally cider, which started to be made in Herefordshire in the early fourteenth century. Some was produced in sheltered areas along the borders, particularly in the south, but amounts have never been great and the Welsh poets were not much concerned with it. There are only a handful of medieval

²⁵ *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 12, 38, and 272; see H. A. Monckton, *A History of English Ale and Beer* (London, 1966), pp. 30–1.

²⁶ J. H. G. Gratton and Charles Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine* (London, 1952), pp. 100–1, 148–49, and 172–73.

²⁷ A red Irish cloak is described as *Criafonllwyth cwrf unlliw: Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, ed. Ifor Williams and J. Llywelyn Williams (Caerdydd, 1961), no. 78, line 58 (and see note, p. 351). The loan-words *bir* and *âl* are attested from the end of the fourteenth century.

²⁸ See Bowen, ‘Beirdd a Noddwyr’, pp. 82–3.

²⁹ GLGC no. 235, lines 49–50.

references.³⁰ As the eighteenth-century poet, Edward Davies (1718–1789), was to boast:

Where cider ends there ale begins to reign,
And warms on Brecknock hills the Cambrian swain;
High on the summit of King Arthur's Chair
He quaffs his ale, and breathes untainted air;
Looks down on Hereford with scornful eyes —
Esteems himself a native of the skies.
Puffed with the thoughts of his exalted birth,
He scorns the humble mushroom sons of earth.³¹

Here we are in the border area dear to the Chadwicks who bought the Old Rectory at Vowchurch in the Golden Valley, some ten miles south-east of Hay-on-Wye.³² Their expeditions must have taken them up Dorstone Hill to see the neolithic chamber called Arthur's Stone, and to nearby Monnington Straddle, where, according to late tradition, Owain Glyn Dŵr spent his last years.³³ In the fifteenth century when much of the Ewyas region was still Welsh-speaking, Guto'r Glyn had sung the praise of Harri ap

³⁰ John Williams–Davies, *Seidr: Diod Gadarn yr Afallen* (Llanrwst, 1986). The earliest mention of *seidr* is in the late fourteenth century: *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, no. 33, line 6 (in a vivid description of a ship carrying ale (*cwrw* and *âl ddu*) and cider); *GPC* notes three references (by Guto'r Glyn, Gutun Owain, and Ieuan Deulwyn) from the fifteenth century.

³¹ *Chepstow, a Poem in Six Cantos* (1784). The quotation follows the text of canto II from the second edition (1786) printed in *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English*, chosen by Gwyn Jones (London, 1977), pp. 123–4.

³² Kenneth Jackson, 'Nora Kershaw Chadwick 1891–1972', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 58 (1972), p. 2 of the offprint pagination; J. M. de Navarro, 'Hector Munro Chadwick, 1870–1947', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33 (1947), 307–30, at 324. Not to be confused with the Old Vicarage, parts of which date to the early sixteenth century, fifty yards south-east of the church. H. M. Chadwick worked in Vowchurch on his projected book, *Early Wales and the Saxon Penetration of the West*.

³³ Griffiths, *Principality*, 140; J. R. S. Phillips, 'When did Owain Glyndŵr Die?' *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 24 (1970–2), 59–77.

Gruffudd at Newcourt, in Bacton, the next parish down, where love poems, ‘the song of Dafydd ap Gwilym’, were in vogue.³⁴ I cannot say whether H. M. on holiday in this liminal area would have plumped for cider or ale. Tea, I suspect, judging from the recurring motif of the Chadwick teapot. The version I heard was Peter Hunter Blair’s, about the enormous teapot wheeled in: ‘Oon cwp’s for you; the rest’s for me’. Another attractive variant features an eiderdown tea-cosy sent by an admirer in Iceland.³⁵

Let us return to the top drink, mead. The word *medd* was extremely handy. Quite apart from the high status of the drink itself, various happy linguistic accidents favoured its literary use throughout the medieval period.³⁶ It rhymed with the word for ‘feast’ (*gwledd*) and with the many plural and abstract nouns ending in *-edd*. It was natural to collocate it with the denominative verb ‘to get drunk’ (*meddwi*) and with the word for honey (*mêl*) and its two related adjectives, yellow (*melyn*) and sweet (*melys*). Moreover, the word *medd* was a homophone of *medd* meaning ‘possession, dominion’, found in the words *meddiant* and *meddu*, and this may have favoured a connection with the idea of sovereignty. The lenited and nasalized forms of *medd* were identical with those of *bedd* ‘grave’. Such linguistic accidents gave plenty of scope for collocation and word-play.³⁷ In later poetry it was a powerfully evocative and useful monosyllable to

³⁴ *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 82, lines 46–47 (a humorous poem in which Harri is taken to task for neglecting the higher orders of poets); nos. 75, 76, and an elegy, no. 83; Saunders Lewis, ‘Gyrfa Filwrol Guto'r Glyn’, *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* 9 (1976), 80–99, at 83–4.

³⁵ de Navarro, ‘Chadwick’, p. 319.

³⁶ Further details in ‘Medd a Mêl Farddoni’, in *Beirdd a Thywysogion*, ed. Roberts and Owen, pp. 39–59.

³⁷ For examples, see below, pp. 14 and 22; celebrated instances are found in ‘Marwnad Lleucu Llwyd’, ed. Dafydd Johnston, *Gwaith Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen* (Aberystwyth, 1998), no. 12, lines 59–60; and in Siôn Cent’s cywydd on the transience of the world: *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, ed. Henry Lewis and others (Caerdydd, 1937), no. 96, p. 291, lines 19–20.

partner the disyllabic favourites, ‘Gwynedd’, *gwragedd* ‘women’, and *bonedd*, the key word for lineage.

Ale, by contrast, was more tricky to use. The word was unstable — *cwr(w)f*, *cwr(y)f* (later *cwrw*)³⁸ — and a metathesized form *cwfr* may have complicated matters. Its narrow range of rhyme partners constricted its use and connotations. It rhymed with *twrf* — which means both ‘a turbulent throng’, such as you might find down the pub, and ‘a disruptive riot’; the few examples of *cwrwf* in the early poetry are rhymed with boring regularity with *twrf*. With these constraints it was not a word the early poets went in for much, except in occasional lists of drinks. There is not a single instance in the court poetry of the Princes between 1130 and 1282. It is all the more unexpected that we have an early poem, ‘The Song of the Ale’, in the Book of Taliesin to which I shall return.

The Juvencus manuscript in the Cambridge University Library contains the earliest extant written Welsh poetry, copied across the top of four pages in the early tenth century. In one of the two poems a Welsh lord and his Frankish mercenary sit in silence either side of a bowlful of mead. Some disaster has struck and the shining mead (*medd nowell*) is a glinting reminder of all that has been lost: song, happy companionship at the feast, banter as well as boast.³⁹ The Welsh lord has no equal to talk to, only the Frank — *mi a’m Ffranc* — or, as one student suggested in an exam, ‘me and my friend Frank’.

Mead in the early Welsh poetry is the central symbol of the sustenance of the warband, its solidarity and community of purpose. In *The Gododdin*, it is the defining characteristic of the

³⁸ The final *-w* did not count as a syllable in strict-metre poetry.

³⁹ Ifor Williams, *The Beginnings of Welsh Poetry*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, second edition (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 89–100. Compare the way in which drinking horns, ladle and table act as a focus for loss in the ‘Anoeth’ *englynion* in Canu Urien (*Canu Llywarch Hen*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1935), p. 15; Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 423).

hall at Edinburgh, constantly referred back to and allied with the idea of joint fosterage.⁴⁰ The heroic bargain is not tempered by any feminine tenderness: ‘It was no mother’s son’ who reared them, or perhaps, if we emend, ‘It was no mother who reared them’.⁴¹ The drink is most often described as ‘fresh’ (*glas*), ‘shining, clear’ (*gloyw, hidlaid*), drunk by the light of candles, which, if they were wax rather than tallow, were also the product of the hive.

The strong drink is constantly juxtaposed with the blood of the warriors or the bloodshed they cause: yellow mead next to red blades sometimes, but wine too, for its colour and the eucharistic precedent.⁴² Cutting to and fro between the drink and the blood, the symbols of the hall and the battle, provided the sort of structural prop needed in non-narrative poetry: ‘Fiercely did you make the blood flow,/ Like drinking mead while laughing’. The hero Gwrhafal was ‘as eager for carnage as for drinking mead and wine’. The point is spelled out in places: ‘If the blood of all the dead you killed were wine/ You would have enough for three or four years’. Elsewhere, the blood and drink flow together: ‘The loved one distributed his plentiful wine.’⁴³ We hear a good deal,

⁴⁰ Present in what John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1997), posits as the ‘most archaic B2 text’ as well as the B1 and A texts.

⁴¹ *Canu Aneirin*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1938), line 366.

⁴² Redcurrants and other fruits could be added to mead to aid fermentation and to lend their colours.

⁴³ *Canu Aneirin*, lines 873–74; 884–85 (B-text); 230–32 (B-text, following Ifor Williams’ emendation); 308. ‘Gwaith Gwên Ystrad’ contains a line ingeniously emended by Ifor Williams and others to fall in line with these images (*The Poems of Taliesin* (Dublin, 1968), poem 2, line 21). The Angles with their faces ashen are invited to wonder at the superabundance of wine (i.e. blood) flowing in the River Eden (reading *Ryuedwynt y cynrein rywin Idon* for ms *kyfedwynt y gynrein kywym don*), or else they are themselves drunk on the blood-wine of the river. But as Graham R. Isaac has noted, *rywin Idon*, the crucial second part of Ifor Williams’ emended line is metrically atypical: ‘*Gweith Gwên Ystrad* and the Northern Heroic Age of the Sixth Century’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (Winter, 1998), 61–70, at 67–8. Other attempts to emend the line are

too, about boasting and psyching-up in the hall, the commitment to future action, ‘the words that we uttered many a time over the mead’, as the *Battle of Maldon* puts it.⁴⁴ This was the boast, the *arfaeth*, another useful pivot between the feasting-hall and the battle-field of Catraeth (which happily rhymes with *arfaeth*).

An early proverb says: ‘Sweet is mead; but bitter when it is paid for’,⁴⁵ making the same point as the drink and blood connection just mentioned. More explicit are the memorable though infrequent references in *The Gododdin* to drink as a bitter draught or poison: ‘although its taste was good its bitterness was long-lasting’ (*Ket vei da e vlas y gas bu hir*); ‘fresh mead their drink and it was poison/harmful’ (*Glasved eu hancwyn a gwenwyn vu*), striking this time because of the word-play: *glasfedd* can mean ‘fresh mead’ or a ‘fresh grave’. Less loaded are the many references to the liberality of individual heroes such as ‘Noble Isag’ of the Gododdin warband ‘like the sea-flood his customs, in courtesy, generosity and fair mead-drinking’.⁴⁶ The same figure is used very aptly in a fifteenth-century *awdl* to Syr Harri, priest of Bardsey Island, his hospitality ‘like the sea’, his hand extending ‘like the strand’.⁴⁷ And in other later poems oceans of Breton wine

bound to sound lame in comparison with the savage black humour supplied by Ifor Williams. A possibility to add to those mentioned by Dr Isaac is *ry(g)wedwynt y gynrein ryfyrd(y)on* ‘May the myriad hosts (< *myrdd*) be yoked/subjugated (the vb. *gweddu*: see Lloyd-Jones, *Geirfa* s.v. *gweðu*) to his [i.e. Urien’s] foremost warriors’, giving a trisyllabic second part to the line, a parallelism with the end-placing of the subject in line 20 (*granwynyon*), and a tolerable sense.

⁴⁴ Bullough, *Friends, Neighbours and Fellow-drinkers*, pp. 15–16.

⁴⁵ *Wech mel. Weru pandalaur*: Ifor Williams, ‘Hen Ddiarhebion’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 3 (1926–27), 22–31, at 23, no. 12.

⁴⁶ *Canu Aneirin*, lines 139, 69, 319–21; and compare *Poems of Taliesin*, no. 8, line 29, *Val mor mwynauwr yw Vryen*.

⁴⁷ GLGC no. 225, lines 47–48, and see Gruffydd, ‘Maritime Trade’, 30–31, for documentary and literary evidence for landings of wine into creeks and inlets along the Llŷn coast. Contrast the lively complaints about the hospitality offered to pilgrims on Bardsey, by Llywelyn ap Gutun, Deio ab Ieuan Du and

and waves of mead ‘greater than the sea-swell beneath the boat’⁴⁸ are here in plenty, generally innocent of the binding commitment to death noted in the early material.⁴⁹

The poet’s own reception of drink from the earliest period on was a popular set-piece; it verified the liberality of the patron and the fruitfulness of his realm. As Taliesin praises Urien’s land of Llwyfenydd he talks in abstractions but sums them up with one concrete detail: ‘Mead from horns’.⁵⁰ It was also a way for the poet to present himself as one honoured in the hall, who was served the first drink at the feast, who was a bodily intimate of the king, sitting at his knee, sleeping in purple, receiving the king’s cast-off clothes. These personal pieces were greatly elaborated in the poetry to the Welsh princes and they provided much-needed variety and interest. This becomes the dominant tone by the fourteenth century, reflecting a far more intimate relationship between the poet, patron and audience.

We will leave the praise poetry for a moment and take a branch line past more unusual poems, many of them associated with the legendary Taliesin, who knows everything, has been everywhere, and indeed has been everything, small and large: a letter and a codex, a grain and a whole sheaf. He is made to talk a lot about poetic inspiration, the ‘awen’ which bubbles and flows from an Otherworld source, sometimes the cauldron of the hag,

other poets: Enid Roberts, *A’u Bryd ar Ynys Enlli* (Tal-y-bont, 1993), pp. 80–2; Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Enlli’r Oesoedd Canol’, in *Enlli*, ed. R. Gerallt Jones and C. J. Arnold (Caerdydd, 1996), pp. 22–48, at 40–1.

⁴⁸ From an *awdl* to Siôn ap Rhosier, abbot of Llantarnam: GLGC no. 118, line 24.

⁴⁹ We may draw attention here to Rhys Goch Eryri’s fine elegy for the magnate, Maredudd ap Cynfrig of Porthaml, Anglesey, who died before 1428. A ship laden with wine making for Gwynedd is hailed from the shore and instructed to turn her prow back towards France. No longer is there any call for wine from Spain or Maine, nor mead nor wine now that Maredudd is dead: *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, no. 101; R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1997), p. 202.

⁵⁰ *Poems of Taliesin*, no. 9, lines 10–14.

Ceridwen — although there is no developed origin story as such in the early material to set beside the Scandinavian ‘mead’ of poetry. Other liquids figure large too, especially springs and sea-tides, milk and honey, and fermented drink. He claims to have been ‘a bubbling in drink’, and even to have ‘resided on its sediment’. It is not so surprising, then, that the Book of Taliesin which reflects so many of his interests⁵¹ should contain two poems about drink.

‘The Song of the Mead’ is largely in praise of God who ‘has made every drink and caused them to work’, but it is partly a plea on behalf of Taliesin’s legendary patron, Elffin, to be released from captivity in Maelgwn Gwynedd’s court at Degannwy. ‘The Song of the Ale’ is much more interesting.⁵² It goes into some detail about the malting process, the boiling, steeping, and mashing (and the nasty smell!) before the mature product is brought forth from the cell and set before the king. Recipes and practical instructions are not at all usual in Welsh poetry. So what is going on here? The first part of the poem puts us firmly on the track of a metaphorical interpretation: although God is praised as the Creator of drink and evening relaxation, it is the storms and winds announcing the Day of Judgment which are most evident. At the heart of the poem are these four lines:

May God deliver me. And before coming to the Judgment Hill,
the host of the world could not accomplish a single thing
without the might of the great King.

Literally ‘they could not accomplish a single grain’ — *un gronyn*, ‘a single thing’ — an idiom as alive today in Welsh as it was in the tenth or eleventh century when the poem was perhaps

⁵¹ His main concerns are discussed in ‘Taliesin’s Questions’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 33 (Summer 1997), 19–79.

⁵² “‘Canu y Medd’ o Lyfr Taliesin’, *Dwned* 1 (1995), 7–23; “‘Canu y Cwrw’ o Lyfr Taliesin’, *Dwned* 4 (1998), 9–32.

composed. The poet then proceeds to the imaginative and unusual treatment of the grain mentioned above. This is clearly related to I Corinthians 15, the body of the resurrection sown, like a grain, ‘in corruption’ but ‘raised in incorruption’, ‘sown a natural body’ but raised as ‘a spiritual body’. The poet mentions the stench of the rotting grain ‘which the earth has bred’ and contrasts it with the clarity and purity of the finished product, ale fit, as he says tellingly, to set before a king. The popularity of the Pauline seed-corn topos in Patristic commentary, in the Anglo-Saxon *Phoenix*, and elsewhere,⁵³ makes this a plausible reading. If it is correct it fits in well with much of the other Taliesin material: ambiguous, riddling, learned, and international.⁵⁴

Before moving on to later poetry, we may pause with condemnation of drink, new and old. It is easy now to smile at the naiveté of the nineteenth-century chemist, Thomas Stephens, who saw the decimation of the Gododdin warband as no more than retribution for their unseemly drinking, going to battle, as he said ‘in a state of hopeless intoxication’. But we should remember that even Sir Ifor Williams, definitely Lifestyle A, was still inclined to the same view until 1915 when Professor Bruce Dickins directed him to a less literal interpretation, via the idea of ‘paying for one’s mead’ in *The Fight at Finnsburg*.⁵⁵

⁵³ *The Phoenix*, ed. N. F. Blake, revised edition (Exeter, 1990), p. 74. No comparable malting and brewing metaphors are mentioned in Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200–1336* (New York, 1995); Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites*, pp. 42–3; also p. 13 on the infrequency of spiritual and metaphorical applications of the imagery of food and drink in Old English poetry.

⁵⁴ Compare the extended question and answer in ‘Canu y Byd Bychan’: ‘Taliesin’s “Lesser Song of the World”’, in *Essays and Poems presented to Daniel Huws*, ed. Tegwyn Jones and E. B. Fryde (Aberystwyth, 1994), pp. 229–50.

⁵⁵ Thomas Stephens, *The Gododdin of Aneurin Gwawdrydd*, ed. Thomas Powel (London, 1888), p. 39; *Canu Aneirin*, pp. xlvi–xlix.

Sir John Rhŷs' very influential *Celtic Folklore* of 1901 presented the earliest version of the inundation of Maes Gwyddnau in Cardigan Bay, found in the Black Book of Carmarthen poem. But he perpetuated two key mistranslations: 'wines' instead of the adjective 'roan' referring to a horse (*gwineu*); and *synnwyr fann* 'weak-witted' rather than 'high-minded', referring to the character Seithennin whom Rhŷs unwisely called 'tipsy'.⁵⁶ Although a lurid picture of drunken Seithennin had already been painted by earlier authors such as Iolo Morganwg and Peacock, Rhŷs' interpretation (published on the eve of the 1904–5 Revival) gripped the Welsh imagination anew obscuring, at a popular level at least, the shadowy but clearly culpable maiden Mererid.⁵⁷

In medieval Welsh sources, serious condemnation of excess drinking is uncommon, or rather you find it exactly where you would expect: in Gildas, of course (drawing deep on Isaiah), in some of the Saints' Lives,⁵⁸ in renunciations of the world and its pleasures,⁵⁹ and in the rebukes of the Soul to the Body. This latter framework was to be turned gloriously inside-out in due

⁵⁶ *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1901) I, 382–5, and II, 419; Rachel Bromwich, 'Cantre'r Gwaelod and Ker-Is', in *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies)*, ed. Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 217–41.

⁵⁷ Bromwich, 'Cantre'r Gwaelod', pp. 222–3. J. J. Williams' poem 'Clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod' (*Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, no. 236), learnt by heart by many school-children of my generation, puts the blame squarely on the negligent watchman on the tower.

⁵⁸ Compare the story of the drunken abbot Piro who fell into a pit one night and died of his injuries: *La Vie Ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol*, ed. Pierre Flobert (Paris, 1997), p. 198.

⁵⁹ Some early examples are noted in 'Medd a Mêl Farddoni', p. 51; see also Haycock, *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* (Swansea, 1994), no. 18, lines 15–16: 'after horses and drinking fresh mead and feasting, and consorting with women I shall not sleep, but heed my death'. The drink beloved by the sinner is contrasted with Christ's vinegar and gall: *Gwaith Bleddyn Ddu*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth, 1994), no. 2, lines 17–28.

course as one fifteenth-century poet threw in his lot wholeheartedly with the Body and its worldly taste for dice, chequers, dancing and carols, implying that all these amusements and more are on offer at Lewys ap Watcyn's hall at Painscastle in Elfael.⁶⁰

It is telling that even the most abusive satirical poems do not condemn drunkenness as such: victims in the fourteenth century are pitiful because they do not get 'as far as the wine-taverns' or because they drink the wrong things: Madog ap Hywel is a 'drunken spindle of dirt' boiling up his brew of 'turnip soup bubbling up with bile', drinking whey instead of mead.⁶¹ The house of the metalworker, Addaf Eurych, is 'an unbeautiful spot, a place of infrequent sausage', 'no wine, no mead, no beer nor cheer', only the unappetizing St Patrick's Day cabbage being pressed on the guests. The stingy host himself is drunk like a crab on slops and flaccid of tongue.⁶² The prose parodies remind us of the ideal — 'new of food, and old of drink' — and its antithesis, mouldy husky bread, hairy butter and 'sour whey in a stinking pail not washed for thirteen weeks'.⁶³ A hero on the other hand would get to drink deep of the finest. He would be, in the words of the prince-poet, Owain Cyfeiliog, 'honourably drunk', while a superhero like Arthur's companion, Cai, would drink from his horn enough 'for four'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ GLGC no. 133. Lewys' father, Gwatacyn Fychan, was from Bredwardine, just below Arthur's Stone in Chadwick country.

⁶¹ *Gwaith Llywelyn Brydydd Hoddnant, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Hillyn ac Eraill*, ed. Ann Parry Owen and Dylan Foster Evans (Aberystwyth, 1996), no. 19, lines 103, 128, 148, and 38. By the sixteenth century, there is a proliferation of poems satirising drunkards 'drowning in beer' and tavern-keepers.

⁶² Hywel Ystorm: *The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest*, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Llanbedrog, 1911), cols. 1337–8 (1337, line 42; 1338, lines 14 and 5).

⁶³ *Yr Areithiau Pros*, ed. D. Gwenallt Jones (Cardiff, 1934), p. 7, line 7; p. 8, lines 2–5.

⁶⁴ 'anrhydeddus feddw': *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill*, no. 14, line 26; *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman (Caerdydd, 1982), no. 31, lines 70–71.

Nevertheless, the poets were well able to recognise the ill-effects of drink. They are neatly listed in a send-up of Drunkenness's genealogy back to Adam: 'son of headache', 'son of tottering', 'son of rib-breaking', 'son of protracted argument', 'son of lame excuse', 'son of yearning', yet for all this, drink is a liberating tonic and the poem ends on a confident note that 'he who drinks shall be a free spirit'.⁶⁵ The physiological drawbacks are also noted in a satire on the poet, Guto'r Glyn, a hypochondriac who nevertheless lived to a great age. It explains that under the eagle eye of his wife, Dwgws (a hypocoristic form of Dyddgu), Guto has had to lay off sauce, meat, bragget and Cheapside wine. But the cure proved to be more enervating than the illness, and it is suggested that Guto will make a quick recovery if he can only make it to the abbot's groaning board at Valle Crucis near Llangollen.⁶⁶

The more sober Welsh Laws recognised that professional conduct could be put in jeopardy from too much drinking: 'Three men of status who, if they are found drunk, receive no compensation if they are insulted': a judge, a priest, and a doctor since all three should always be on-call to offer their services'.⁶⁷ In the case of poets, the effectiveness of oral delivery could be compromised by over-indulgence, but reciters and apprentices could presumably stand in when needed. There was certainly a good deal of entertainment to be had from the topic. One of the prose parodies doubts the poet Sypyn Cyfeiliog's ability to recite

⁶⁵ GLGC no. 235, lines 24–44 and 53–4 (45 manuscript copies testify to the appeal of this *cywydd*). In the same vein is the later 'Genealogy of Ale' (*Cywydd Achau'r Cwrw*) with its 'son of boasting', 'son of bone-breaking', 'son of madness'. I am indebted to Dr A. Cynfael Lake for sight of his edition of this item, and to Professor D. J. Bowen for bringing it to my attention. Dr Lake has in hand a study of later poems on drink.

⁶⁶ *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 108.

⁶⁷ *The Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws*, ed. Hywel D. Emanuel (Cardiff, 1967), p. 509.

after bingeing on strong Radnorshire ale.⁶⁸ And we hear the Tongue castigating the poet Llywelyn ab y Moel. He is bad enough when empty but insufferable when full, eloquent on the subject of ‘St Brigid’s ale’ which fills him with roaring and raving ‘like the belly of a Jew’. The poet’s reply is no more politically-correct, I’m afraid: the Tongue, maundering on about Llywelyn’s girlfriend, Euron, must have been ‘baptized by a drunken Irish priest’!⁶⁹

Poetic debates often refer, again in a very light-hearted way, to drink impairing judgment. Guto’r Glyn was satirized by Llywelyn ap Gutun in a mock elegy, frequently quoted. He had drowned off the coast of Anglesey, indeed had ‘gone to Heaven because he couldn’t swim’. Guto replied tartly that Llywelyn, usually ‘wise and decent’, had so much wine in him after doing the rounds of his various patrons that he was bound to have drowning on the brain. That was the reason, he says, why it was ‘in the sea that he wanted to make my grave’ (*Ac yn y môr y gwnâi ’medd*), with the old word-play on *bedd* ‘grave’ and *medd* ‘mead’.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Areithiau Pros*, p. 15: ‘Pan fo cystal ieithydd Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd ar ôl llyn *Gwerthrynion* ag Uriel wastadiaith, y gŵr ni chlybu iaith ei glustiau nas traethai â’i dafod cyn gyflymed ag y’i clywai.’ (text emended and modernised); see comment in *Gwaith Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd ‘Sypyn Cyfeiliog’ a Llywelyn ab y Moel*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth, 1998), p. 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 12. Since the poem (like others by Llywelyn) mentions y Graig Lwyd, near Llanymynech, the beer he alludes to may have come from nearby Llansanffraid-ym-Mechain. Iorwerth Fynglwyd, who lived at St Brides Major (Glamorgan), recounts some of the traditions associated with Ffraid (and her Irish counterpart) including her providing two inexhaustible vats of beer for the churches dedicated to her (*Gwaith Iorwerth Fynglwyd*, ed. Howell Ll. Jones and E. I. Rowlands (Caerdydd, 1975), no. 43, lines 29–32). Further references to ‘cwrw San Ffraid’ are noted by Elissa Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 162–3.

⁷⁰ *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 37, line 4; no. 38, line 38.

From hall and home drinking we can move on to taverns, first mentioned in poetry in the first half of the thirteenth century, much later than in England.⁷¹ The tavern was — like the church — another place to see and be seen: one poet, thanking his patron for a red mantle, a wondrous garment like ‘sealing wax’, says that he is off to the mead-tavern so that the girls can see him ‘like a red dragon’ in his new outfit.⁷² Taverns were not necessarily ‘low life’; there was clearly a range of different premises, from what in Aberystwyth we call a ‘fighting pub’ up to the relative refinement of the establishments frequented by the higher orders. In some of these at least, poems would have been performed.⁷³

Patrick Wormald has stated memorably that St Æthelwold was ‘the first Englishman known to have been born in a town’. In the same spirit we may say that Dafydd ap Gwilym was the first Welsh poet known to have gone on the town. He enjoyed the buzz

⁷¹ Although *tafarn* is an early borrowing from Latin, the word is not attested until the thirteenth century, when it is used figuratively by Y Prydydd Bychan (*fl.* 1222–68) of the deceased Llywelyn fab Rhys fab Iorwerth, who may have been a court official, perhaps a steward, in Powys: ed. Morfydd E. Owen, in *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill*, ed. Rhian Andrews and others, *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion VII* (Caerdydd, 1996), no. 19, line 12. Wine- and mead-taverns are mentioned increasingly in the fourteenth century (Bowen, ‘Trefydd Drwg’, pp. 209–19), and ‘tavern’ comes to be used also as a figure for domestic halls as well as patrons.

⁷² Ieuan Du’r Bilwg, in *Detholiad o Gywyddau Gofyn a Diolch*, ed. Bleddyn Owen Huws (Abertawe, 1998), no. 13, lines 19, 51–60.

⁷³ *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Thomas Parry, second edition (Caerdydd, 1963) [GDG], no. 85, lines 17–20, which suggest that Dafydd ap Gwilym may have performed poems about his love Morfudd in wine- and mead-taverns. The question is fully considered by Bowen, ‘Trefydd Drwg’, pp. 212–13 and 217–18. Whether the guilds merchant corporately commissioned poets is uncertain, but Dafydd’s *cywydd* ‘Cyfeddach’ (GDG no. 132) which has been described as a ‘curious hybrid of drinking-song and love-poem’ may be an example: it plays extensively on the words for payment and reciprocation, *gild* and *gildio*, as the poet plies his love with a never-ending supply of wine, imagining them to be together in Gascony on Easter Day. See Huw M. Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Influences and Analogues* (Oxford, 1996), p. 172.

of urban life in its fullness, in Aberystwyth and elsewhere, while at the same time poking fun at the *nouveaux riches* and the people in trade who made such places tick such as Elen Nordd, the wool-trading wife of the documented burgess Robin le Northern of Aberystwyth with her imperfect Welsh and her misguided idea that praise-poems could be bought for a few pairs of woollen stockings. In the plantation settlement of Newborough in Anglesey Dafydd enjoyed its ‘wine, beer, mead — and love’, including the classier attractions of nearby Rhosyr, a former seat of the princes of Gwynedd, an ‘old hearth’ featuring the famous ‘Cauldron of Rebirth’. On Saint Peter’s Day Dafydd acts big, buying two gallons of wine for his friends and sending some to a girl’s room with a message of love. ‘Who sent you?’ she asks. ‘The pale-faced poet who’s been singing your praises like a bell throughout Gwynedd’. She is not impressed and tips the wine over the servant. Dafydd retaliates by defaming her for consorting with Madog Hir and Einion Dot, whoever they were.⁷⁴ The tavern setting was certainly liberating, allowing Dafydd’s persona to interact with a range of social types in ways not accommodated by the conventional obligations of domestic praise.⁷⁵ Although the noble *uchelwyr* audiences in their halls might affect to appreciate the urban poems as entertaining sorties, they were surely moved, too, to consider their social and cultural alignments in the uneasy post-Conquest order.

An unusual *cywydd* from the following century praises a very distant relative of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s great love, Morfudd. Her name was Lleucu, she was of impeccable lineage on both sides, and she kept a tavern in Corwen.⁷⁶ Hywel Gethin chose to

⁷⁴ GDG nos. 98, 134 and 128.

⁷⁵ Compare GDG no. 56, affecting unrequited love for a noblewoman (Dyddgu, perhaps), generous in her provision of drink at home, but miserly with her favours, and ‘slow to go to the tavern’ (line 34).

⁷⁶ Ed. É. Bachellety, ‘Le poète Hywel Gethin et le MS. British Museum Additional 14967’, *Études celtiques* 5 (1949–51), 248–59.

conform to the praise conventions: Lleucu is like Ygerna, a ‘radiant dawn’, ‘a woman of wise words’, and so on — a very far cry from John Skelton’s Elynour Rummyng⁷⁷ — but she has perforce to be linked with beer, although the fiction is maintained that it was given rather than sold. Other noble women were nearly always linked with mead and wine, however busy they may have been overseeing their homebrews. The French Celticist, Édouard Bachellery, who was married to a Welsh woman, was very struck by Lleucu, the *patronne* famed ‘from Canterbury to fair Ceiriog’. Her place was a poems and pints establishment, resounding with harp music, where great ‘fame was knotted together’ by itinerant poets. Hywel turns his back on ‘sugar and wine’ in order to drink her beer, as good as Carmarthen’s. This ‘earl of ales’ has wondrously varied effects on the drinkers: one slurred of speech in his own little heavenly banquet, another spoiling for a fight, another tottering about like a cripple, and in the far corner a drinker fast asleep ‘like a weak lamb’.⁷⁸

The pleasure aspect of drink is channelled and refined in another genre, in the love poems which became so frequent from Dafydd ap Gwilym’s time on. They were portable entertainment, not patron-specific. For some poets, poems to unnamed women

⁷⁷ Other Welsh women taverners, however, fared little better than their English contemporaries, characterised as grasping, dishonest and ill-favoured. A corrupt fourteenth-century englyn vilifies a tavern-keeper called Gwion, who may be female (there are some examples of Gwion as a woman’s name in the Dyffryn Clwyd Court Rolls: Meredith Cane, ‘Personal Names of Women in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany 400–1400’, unpublished M. Phil. dissertation, University of Wales, 2000, pp. 33 and 41): *Gwaith Bleddyn Ddu*, no. 13. Gweryl ferch Tomas and Annes ferch Gruffudd of Pen-y-sarn Hir and Ardudwy respectively are the butt of poems by Dafydd Llwyd ap Huw and Rhisiart Phylip in the sixteenth century; a further *cywydd* (wrongly attributed to Gwerful Mechain) asking for a harp may have been composed by a poet who assumed the stereotypical persona of the suppliant, a woman tavern-keeper. I hope to discuss these examples and others elsewhere.

⁷⁸ Bachellery, ‘Le poète Hywel Gethin’, pp. 252–3, lines 2, 5, 33, 20, 37, 48, 39–45.

(or their own girlfriends) were their main output. Intoxication, like enchantment, is used regularly as a figure for being struck by love: the lover, gripped by passion, is ‘a drunken wreck’, his ‘thoughts intoxicated’, and so on.⁷⁹ The lady, as described in hundreds of these poems, is ‘edible woman’ with a vengeance, a delicious, fragrant and health-giving consumable, breathing balsam and spices of Araby, her lips glossed with treacle, mead and wine. This is not Enright’s *Lady with a Mead Cup*, rather ‘the lady *in* the mead cup’. And physical love is an anti-feast, mainly liquid, in a woodland ‘house of leaves’ rather than in real-life houses of dead wood and stone.⁸⁰ Dafydd ap Gwilym invites his Dyddgu down to Dôl Manafan near Aberystwyth, not to have what he calls ‘a ploughman’s lunch’ (*cinio amaeth*), nor a meaty Mardi Gras blow-out, nor a meal plagued by beggars demanding flour and cheese. Theirs will be a meal *à deux* with the ‘nightingale and mead’.⁸¹ Dafydd’s Grey Friar of course, condemns the whole construct as a lie — the woodland tryst, the girls, the drink: ‘There’s only inconstancy in trees and leaves. Don’t be with women; learn, for Mary’s sake, to spurn the mead. Green leaves on the trees are not worth a bean, nor the tavern, in comparison with God’s word.’⁸²

Love poems were one thing. Praise of noble patronesses was another matter. Physicality was kept firmly in check. Whereas the lady-love was like a therapeutic or even sacramental drink, the respectable matron’s wine and mead point instead to her distinguished lineage, her liberality, charity, and piety, and her housewifely virtues. We see, for instance, Margaret Hanmer, Owain Glyn Dŵr’s wife, presiding over the celestial harmony of their moated show-home at Sycharth: ‘The finest of all women,

⁷⁹ Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, pp. 92–6.

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Braslun*, p. 82.

⁸¹ GDG no. 119.

⁸² GDG no. 136, lines 11–16.

blessed am I because of her wine and mead,' says Iolo Goch.⁸³ Many poets link the provision of drink with the private devotion and public charity of the 'holy housewife'. Lewys Glyn Cothi says of the fifteenth-century matron, Siwan Du: 'Dispensing wine and hiring servants is *her* work — and meditating on God' like the saintly daughters of Brychan. In one hand she holds four rosary strings; the other points to a drinking bowl and a horn of mead. As Saint Catherine's breast gave forth oil in the grave, so flow Siwan's wine and mead, likened as well to the 'sea of James', the wide Bay of Biscay, crossed by countless pilgrims to Santiago da Compostela.⁸⁴

Lewys Glyn Cothi has aptly been called 'the poet of the wives'.⁸⁵ Many of his 230 praise poems portray marriages whose harmony is underlined by the symmetry of the descriptions of man and wife.⁸⁶ The hospitality of Bedo Chwith, his patron from Cregrina, is likened to the local river Edwy 'in flood with Weobley ale'; that of Gwenllian, his wife from Cil-y-cwm, is 'the mead of the river Tywi'.⁸⁷ Hywel ap Rhydderch, another patron from the border area, and his wife, Annes, are said to be, respectively, wine and vine: *Hywel yw'r gwin hael o'r gwýdd,/ ac Annes yw y gwinwydd*.⁸⁸ The idea of the wife-progenetrix as vine is very common indeed. Sometimes, bizarrely, she is a 'mead-vine'.

⁸³ *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, no. 10, lines 81–82.

⁸⁴ GLGC no. 25, lines 21–26; 35–42, and note on p. 535 for the suggested interpretation of *môr Iago* in line 41.

⁸⁵ Dafydd Johnston, 'Lewys Glyn Cothi: Bardd y Gwagedd', *Taliesin* 74 (1991), 68–77.

⁸⁶ GLGC no. 162, lines 52–3, is unusual for its use of direct speech to convey their joint enterprise: *medd Elys, "Rhys, rho i hwn", / medd Rhys, "Elys, na tholiwn"*. ("Give to this man, Rhys", says Alice; "Let's not stint, Alice", says Rhys).

⁸⁷ GLGC no. 150, lines 19–22.

⁸⁸ GLGC no. 148, lines 47–8.

Poems asking and thanking for gifts form a distinct and attractive sub-class of the praise tradition. Of the 300 or so examples, not one asks for drink, presumably because that is taken for granted. And drink was difficult to describe metaphorically, as the genre demanded. It was possible to make something of objects such as swords, musical instruments, bed hangings, and even spectacles ('like two wheels over the nose!'). However there are a few sixteenth-century requests for hives and swarms of bees, on behalf of a newly-married couple in one case, to provide the wherewithal for making mead; and drink is used figuratively in describing other objects. For example, Annes (the 'vine' whom we have already met) and one of her neighbours, Isabel, are approached for a pair of cows, 'stout barrels' carrying liquid as white as new Gascon wine, but with none of its dangers.⁸⁹

Leaving the ladies, we can finish by rejoining our soldier-friend, Guto'r Glyn, this time in a drinking-bout in the mid 1440s sponsored by his patron, Tomas ap Watcyn Fychan (of Llanddewi Rhydderch in Gwent) who was about to leave for the French wars. In the old poetry, it was the boast or *arfaeth* over mead which had put heart into the soldiers of *The Gododdin*; it was hearing the blustering Fflamddwyn being cut down to size in verbal combat which made Urien's men believe they could 'kill both him and his soldiers'.⁹⁰ In the present instance fears for the morrow are controlled by yet another sort of play. The poem is cast as a war-game: 'Let's pretend the high table is France!'. Wine, mead and beer are given a new spin, representing the Dauphin and his renowned generals, La Hire and Poton de Xantrailles. On the home side, heralded by St David, are the ranks of devoted reciters,

⁸⁹ *Detholiad o Gywyddau Gofyn a Diolch*, ed. Huws, no. 25 (the bees are a 'noisy nation' collecting 'manna'); GLGC no. 147, especially the multiple metaphors (*dyfalu*) in lines 29–56. On request poems for animals, and the *dyfalu* techniques used in this genre, see Bleddyn Owen Huws, *Y Canu Gofyn a Diolch c. 1350 – c. 1630* (Caerdydd, 1998), pp. 72–3 and 160–210.

⁹⁰ *Poems of Taliesin*, no. 6.

poets and minstrels doing their best to down the ‘enemy’, but being well and truly floored. Now Tomas ‘the king of the wine-battle of Gwent’ must go forth on their behalf to avenge the defeat, to ‘kill the Dolphin and his crew’.⁹¹

There seems to be a lack of drinking-songs as a genre in medieval Wales.⁹² But there is plenty of evidence that the poets made extensive and imaginative use of drink and drinking, from the shining mead of the Gododdin or Taliesin’s rotting barley-grain to the lovers’ taste of honey or the more fanciful images just mentioned. It will be evident, too, that there is a good deal yet to be tapped.⁹³

⁹¹ *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 4; on this and other poems to soldiers, see Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales c. 1415–1642* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 169–73.

⁹² Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p. 172, n. 42: ‘as found, for instance, in medieval Latin goliardic poetry.’

⁹³ I wish to express my appreciation of the welcome extended by the Department, and to thank Professor D. J. Bowen for his help, comments and corrections in preparing the written version of the lecture.