

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch and Hywel Coetmor



Two Effigies



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2022

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Two medieval military effigies in Llanrwst and Betws-y-Coed churches

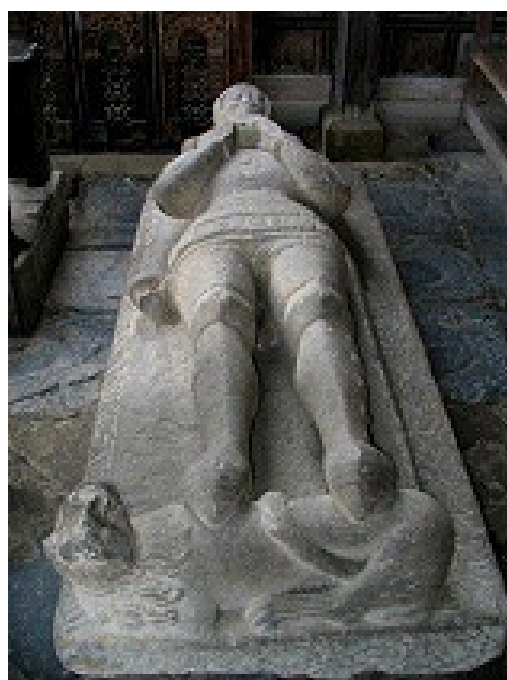


Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch
Betws-y-coed, c.1385
Helmet with hanging mail neck protection
(cmail). Plate armour on both arms and legs.
Probably a breastplate under the tight-waisted
cloth jupon.

Under his head is an eagle crested tilting helmet partly cut off to accommodate a new position after the 1843 refurbishment. A lion at his feet.

The inscription reads:- HIE JACET GRUFYD ap DAVYD GOCH. AGNUS DEI MISERE MEI
Here lies Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch Lamb of God have mercy upon me

Hywel Coetmor
Llanrwst Church c.1440
Pointed helmet with mail neck protection.
The armour on body, arms and legs has hinged pieces,
with fine gauntlets and sabatons on his feet.
Decorative besegaws, or disks, over armpits.



The inscription along the side is now rather indistinct but it reads:-
HIC IACIT HOWEL COYTMOR AP GUFF' VYCHAN AP GRUFF' ARMIGER
Here lies Hywel Coetmor ap Gruffydd Fychan ap Gruffydd Armiger

Hywel Coetmor and Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch

Stone effigies of knights in armour lie in the parish church of Llanrwst and in the old church by the River Conwy in Betws-y-coed. Hywel Coetmor takes his place amongst the Wynns of Gwydir, in their own chapel attached to St. Grwst's church in Llanrwst (he was moved there from the main church in the 18th century), whilst Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch lies in the much smaller St Michael's church in Betws-y-coed. He was also moved in the 19th century and has been slightly trimmed to fit in an arched niche to the right of the altar.

The two effigies derive from a distinct North Wales school of sculpture, which began with heavy coffin slabs carved with crosses, circles, and foliage patterns in the early 13th century, and evolved into more three-dimensional effigies of priests and knights by the mid 1300s. By the time Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch's effigy was made (c.1385) the sculptors used a fine-grained sandstone from Gwespyr, on the Dee estuary, similar stone being used for Hywel Coetmor's tomb in Llanrwst. We'll probably never know if the heavy stone was carried here by sea and river barges, or overland, and whether the fine detail was carved in a workshop by the Dee, or by itinerant craftsmen on site.

What is certain is that the finished figures once looked very different than they do now:-

*"... the stone carver delighted not in the rough greys and browns of the sandstones and gritstones, but smoothed their surfaces with gesso and painted them until they glowed with the richness of precious stones. When we find the battered remains of an effigy we are seeing hardly anything of medieval art as such unless we can visualize the original monument as it was first set up, smooth in surface, sharp in outline, and brilliant in fresh colours that sparkle with touches of gold."*¹

There's a lot more that could be said about the effigies – the strange 'Lombardic' alphabet used for the lettering on the sides of the tombs; the development of armour between Gruffydd's effigy in 1385 and Hywel Coetmor's in 1440; the way that social unrest and the Black Death affected the trade in effigies; and how changing fashion made alabaster from Nottingham the preferred material for later work. But the main focus of this article is to understand who these two people were, and what was it like to live in Nant Conwy and Wales during this turbulent medieval period.²

The heraldic decoration on Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch's effigy is discussed by Peter Siddons in his recent survey of Welsh Heraldry.³ He takes up the point made by Colin Gresham (1968), that many of the motifs on the sepulchral figures might be decorative rather than heraldic devices. Thus the arms on Gruffydd's buckle and jupon – a *chevron and in chief two oak leaves* – were never attributed to him by later writers, and cannot be linked to any obvious ancestor. The matching crest of – *a bird's head, holding an oak leaf in its beak* – is also untraceable.

Siddons also gives several references from old heraldic sources of a coat of arms attributed to Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch. This is sable, a lion rampant Argent (Or), within a bordure engrailed (or indented) Or (Argent)

1. Colin A. Gresham – Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales, 1968
2. Appendix 3 – The Development of Armour
3. Peter Siddons 2006 Vol.1 pp.192-193 and Vol III p.189

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch b.c.1320

Gruffydd s/o Dafydd Goch was one of the most important people in the area. He was a small landowner and was married to Margaret vch Tudor ap Iorwerth. He and his wife freely held land in the township of Cwllanerch near Betws y Coed. This meant he didn't have to pay rent to the King and could sub-let land and property in exchange for dues and services.⁴ They also held land in several other places in North Wales. Gruffydd does not appear to have lived in Cwynllanerch. He was a high-status absentee landowner based in Anglesey.

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch's ancestry is a matter of contention and it has been suggested that he lived at Fedw Deg, Penmachno but this is also disputed. (see p.5) Several early accounts suggest that his father, Dafydd Goch, was the illegitimate son of Prince Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewelyn the Last. Others believe that he was descended from Nefydd Hardd (b.abt.1105) of Penmachno, Nant Conwy, Caernarfonshire who was the founder of the 6th Noble Tribe of North Wales.⁵ Nefydd was descended from Heilig ap Glannog who, in the 10th century, held most of North Gwynedd east of Arfon and north of Arudwy.⁶

The Debate about the Ancestry of Dafydd Goch

Lewys Dwnn⁷ c.1550-1616 (Welsh poet and Welsh genealogist) claimed that Dafydd Goch was the illegitimate son of Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd (the last prince of an independent Wales before it's conquest by Edward I), and descendant of Owain Gwynedd, the first Prince of Wales 1100-1170.

J.Y.W. Lloyd⁸1816-1887 (English Anglican cleric, Catholic convert, antiquarian and genealogist) also believed that Prince Dafydd (ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewelyn the Last) had an illegitimate son, Dafydd Goch of Nant Conway. He stated that David Goch of Penmachno was the natural son of Dafydd, Lord of Denbigh and Frodsham, who was captured by Edward I's soldiers, tried at Shrewsbury in 1283, and suffered a slow and agonising death.⁹

When Edward I conquered Wales he decided to wipe out all descendants of Dafydd ap Gruffydd. If this was the case, it is unclear why he would leave even an illegitimate son alive. In an article written by Darrell Wolcott,¹⁰ 'Dafydd Goch ap Dafydd – his real ancestry', this identification is questioned.

Wolcott believes that Dafydd Goch was not killed by Edward I because he was not the son of Prince Dafydd but instead the son of Dafydd ap Gruffydd ap Llewelyn ap Iorwerth ap Nefydd Hardd (of Penmachno, Nant Conway).

The 4 – name string of male names (below) explains the possible source of this confusion.

4. www.historypoints.org

5. Appendix 2 – The Ancestry of Nefydd Hardd

6. Appendix 1 – Nant Conway – Background History

7. Heraldic Visitations of Wales 1586 – 1613 pp.255-256 Edited by Meyrick 1896

8. History of Powys Fadog'vol I p.192

9. Vol. III p.32/33

10. www.ancientwalesstudies.org

Traditional line

1100 Owain Gwynedd
 I
 1130 Iorwerth
 I
 1165 Llewelyn Fawr
 I
 1195 Gruffydd
 I
 1230 **Dafydd** (brother of Llewelyn the last)

Alternate Line

1105 **Nefydd Hardd**
 I
 1140 Iorwerth (of Penmachno)
 I
 1170 Llewelyn
 I
 1200 Gruffydd
 I
 1230 **Dafydd**

1260 **Dafydd Goch** m. Angharad vch Heilin ap Tudur

I

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch m. **Margred** vch. Tudur ap Iorwerth
 b.abt. 1300 d.1365

I

Gruffydd Fychan m. Tanglwst vch. Meredydd Goch ap Meredydd
 of Nant Conwy

I

.....
 I I I I
Hywel Coetmor m. Gwenllian vch Rhys ap Robert Ifan Margaret Rhys Gethin
 I

.....
 Angharad Annes **Dafydd** Einion Eurddyled Evan Gruffydd Gwenhwyfer Madog Nest Rhys

Research by Peter Bartrum also suggests that Dafydd Goch was descended from Nefydd Hardd, (see pedigree below) but more recently, Frances Richardson, has claimed that the connection to Nefydd Hardd was actually through Gruffydd's wife, Margred.¹¹

“It was Gruffudd’s wife Margaret who brought the Cwmlannerch and Gwely Cyfnerth ap Rhufon lands in Gwedir to the marriage. She was descended from Nefydd Hardd of Nantconwy, and also inherited lands in Gwely Iorwerth ap Gwrgunon in Bodhunod, Twrcelyn, Anglesey. Moreover her son, Tudur ap Iorwerth, was named after her father, reflecting a practice of naming heirs after their mother or maternal grandfather to acknowledge the source of their inheritance. The other heirs of this half of Cwmlannerch were all relatives: Rhys ap Dafydd was the grandson of Margaret’s sister Gwenllian, while Llywelyn and Ieuan ap Hywel were her second-cousins and were also co-heirs in Gwedir and Bohunod.”

“The first-named landholder of half of Cwmlannerch in 1352 was Gruffudd ap Dafydd Goch, with his wife Margaret and their son and heir Tudur ap Iorwerth. Gruffudd acted as chairman of the Trefriw jury for the Record of Caernarvon and was evidently regarded as the most prestigious resident in Nantconwy. He enjoyed extensive holdings elsewhere in Nantconwy, including three bovates of free land carved out of the prince’s demesne in Penmachno, and gwely land in Gwedir, and was also the sole heir of Gwely Mareddydd ap Einion in Botan township in the commote of Talybolion, Anglesey.¹²

11. Frances Richardson – notes on Nantconwy

12. A. D. Carr, ‘The Extent of Anglesey, 1352’, Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society (1971-2), pp.150-272, p. 196.

Nefydd Hardd

I

.....
Dunod

Rhufon

Iorwerth

I

.....
Cyfnerth

Tegwared

Iorwerth

Gronwy

Iarddur

I

.....
Gwrgunon

Hwfa

I

Iorwerth

I

.....
Madog Goch

Tudur m. Tanglwst

I

.....
Dafydd Goch

Gwenllian

Margred

(Peter Bartrum believed that

Dafydd Goch was the s/o

Tudur ap Iorwerth

of Cwmllanerch

m.

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch

Gruffydd seems to have spent much of his life outside Wales in the service of Edward I and Edward II, but around 1315-18 the king granted his petition to retire to Aberconwy Abbey at Maenan among his own relations, with provision of food, robes and all necessities.¹³

His effigy in St. Michael's church shows him as an armoured esquire, suggesting that he did render military service.

Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch and Fedw Deg

Gruffudd ap Dafydd Goch is described as 'of Fedw Deg' in W. Bezant Lowe.¹⁴ Fedw Deg was in Betws township where Gruffudd did not hold land. In repeating this possible Fedw Deg connection, Colin Gresham¹⁵ confused Gruffudd ap Dafydd Goch with Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Llywarch, one of the heirs of Gwely Cynwrig ab Iddon in Betws and Llanrwst.¹⁶

The original reference linking Gruffydd to Fedw Deg appears to have come from Richard Fenton in his article published as a supplement to *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1917.¹⁷ Fenton meets the Rev. Pryce of Hendre Rhys Gethin, Betws y coed, who shows him St Michael's Church.

“Mr. Pryce told me he possesses not only Hendre Rhys Gethin, but Vedw deg, the residence as it is

13. W. Rees, *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales: Thirteenth to Sixteenth Century* (Cardiff 1975), p. 385;

R. W. Hays, *The History of the Abbey of Aberconwy, 1186-1537* (Cardiff, 1963), pp.92-3.

14. Bezant Lowe - *The Heart of Northern Wales Vol. II* (Llanfairfechan, 1927), p.309.

15. Colin Gresham - *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales* (Cardiff, 1968), pp.194-5.

16. P. Vinogradoff and F. Morgan (eds.), *Survey of the Honour of Denbigh 1334* (London, 1914), thereafter S. D.], Table 2)

17. *Archaeologia Cambrensis Tours in Wales (1804-1813) 1917.*

said of the chieftain buried at Betws [Gruffydd ap Dafydd goch]”.¹⁸

Gruffydd's effigy: “The Rev. Mr Pryce of Hendre Rhys Gethin claims the niche, with its sculptured inmate, and the seat adjoining it. One of his family, a nephew, has been buried there.”¹⁹

However, the Rev. Pryce cannot be regarded as a very reliable source on ownership 450 years before his time. He was not a descendant of Rhys Gethin, his little estate having changed hands a couple of times. Moreover, it is clear that he had a vested interest in claiming a relationship between Gruffydd and Fedw Deg, in order to claim possession of the niche and adjoining seat in the church.

If Gruffydd was from Fedw Deg, Penmachno he probably would have been buried there.

Foreman of a Jury

Gruffydd was listed as the foreman of a jury, which met at Trefriw in 1352, to assess the value of the Prince of Wales' holdings.²⁰ The aim was almost certainly to increase revenue from the Prince's lands, and at this period, taxes were mostly assessed in cash, rather than in the more traditional yields of grain, cattle or timber. The authority of the Crown rested in the Prince of Wales who was well-known for his hard-headed approach to matters of taxation and obtaining the maximum revenue from his land.

Gruffydd was described in the Jury document as ‘*One of the heirs of Gwely Ken ap Ithon, and as holding three bovates of arable land in Penmachno.* (a bovate varied in size - between 5-10 acres - which made him a small landowner). Together with his wife and four others he held a '*moiety of Cwmlanerch*' (about a mile north of the church on the west bank of the Conwy). His wife is named as Margaret, daughter and heiress of Tudur ap Iorwerth. He is also mentioned as holding alone the '*Gwely Maredudd ab Eignion, in Bottan, in the commote of Talybolion, Anglesey*'. In the Survey of Denbigh 1334, a Gruffydd ap David is recorded as holding '*three holdings of land,*' one of which was in Llanrwst.²¹

Hywel Coetmor

Hywel Coetmor (great grandson of Dafydd Goch of Fedw Deg, Penmachno) was a Welsh landowner and soldier who took part in Owain Glyndŵr's rising. He may have earlier fought under the Black Prince at the Battle of Poitiers (1356). His brother Rhys Gethin was one of Glyndŵr's leading generals.

Hywel's father Gruffydd Fychan married Tanglwst vch Merwydd Goch ap Maredudd and he held land around Betws y Coed and he probably owned Gwydir and was the first to build a house on the site of Plas Gwydir. He also held land that included Castell Gefel which was probably the 'Castell' in Gwydir forest about a mile west of Cwmlanerch. Indeed, 'Coetmor' may have been the same Coed Mawr, that is now a house in the vicinity.

From his military effigy, to the contemporary poetry about his part in the violent clashes of the Glyn Dŵr uprising, and to later historians who describe his role at Poitiers or Agincourt, there seems no doubt that Hywel Coetmor was an experienced fighting man. The problem is that there is virtually

18. *ibid.* p.185

19. *ibid.* p.193

20. *The Record of Caernarvon*, Record Commission, London, 1838.

21. *Survey of the Honour of Denbigh, 1334*, British Academy Records, vol. I, London, 1914

no written primary evidence to prove everything ascribed to him. One of the earliest references to him is by Sir John Wynn of Gwydir, who, in his *History of the Gwydir family & Memoirs*, written before 1627, describes: *Howel Coytmor who lieth buried in a fair monument in Llanrwst Church in ye County of Denbigh. He was a Captain of 100 Denbighshire men wth ye Black prince at ye field of Poytiers [1356] where John of France was taken.* A later reference by T.A. Glenn in *The family of Griffith of Garn 1934*, quotes Sir John Wynn (above) but adds that he died in Flanders. Several other writers state that he fought at Agincourt in 1415, rather than Poitiers in 1356. In terms of Hywel's age, it is far more likely that it was his grandfather, Gruffudd ap Dafydd Goch (whose effigy is in Betws-y-coed) who fought at Poitiers. Hywel was a young man in 1390, who fought with Owain Glyn Dŵr from 1400-06, and thus he could have been at the next famous battle in the French wars - Agincourt in 1415.

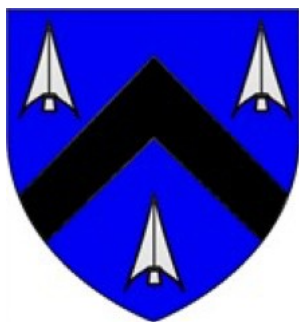
A new research project has used the original muster rolls for these campaigns, which are still kept in the National Archives in London, to create a database of all soldiers who served Henry IV and Henry V in France. There are many Howells from Wales listed here, but no Howell Coytmor (which was the common spelling at that time). However, a contemporary poem – *Moliant i Hywel Coetmor o Nanconwy* – describes Hywel's reputation in the French wars:-

Gŵr glân a gâi'n Lloegr y glod I Ffrainc y curia Ffrancod
 "A resplendent soldier renowned for assisting the England to defeat the French"

This, and another poem – *Moliant y Rhys Gethin o Nanconwy* – continue to praise the brothers' fighting prowess and mention Hywel's close family links to Sir Hywel y Pedolau of Anglesey.²²

His coat of arms is described as:- Azure (blue), a chevron sable between three spearheads argent pointed upwards (later changed to Chevron argent to conform to the rules of heraldry which forbade the use of colour upon colour).²³

Part of the confusion about the ancestry of Dafydd Goch may have arisen because of the similarity between the coat of arms of Hywel Coetmor and that of Nefydd Hardd.



Hywel Coetmor



Nefydd Hardd

22. Appendix 4 – Praise for Hywel Coetmor of Nanconwy

23. *ibid* - Siddons

Welsh Soldiers in the Hundred Years War

During the first hundred and fifty years after English rule was established in North Wales - between about 1300 and 1450 – local Welsh people would have been well aware that the English Crown was fighting costly wars in other countries. As each campaign was organised so came the demands that Wales supplied both men and money for the latest expedition.

The Welsh were well-known as fighting men. Warfare had been a way of life in their tribal society for hundreds of years and the Norman Kings and Marcher lords soon began recruiting archers and spearmen from their conquered Welsh lands for wars on the continent.

A Flemish chronicler describes them in camp in 1297:-

There you saw the peculiar habits of the Welsh. In the very depth of winter they were running about bare-legged.... Their weapons were bows, arrows and swords. They also had javelins. They wore linen clothing. They were great drinkers. They endamaged the Flemings very much. Their pay was too small and so it came about that they took what did not belong to them.

Levies of soldiers were raised by the King issuing a royal writ of array to his Justiciar in North Wales. The latter had to recruit able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60, equip them, pay an instalment of their wages, and arrange for transport to their port of embarkation. In 1345, Roger de Trumwyn, recorded that he had the required levy at Conwy ready to march, but because no pay was forthcoming from the royal exchequer, the men had disbanded and returned home.

The Welsh levies preferred to be led by one of their own local leaders, and these ‘knights’ were paid a yearly stipend of £20, compared to 2d a day (old money) for the spearmen.

From 1343 to 1376, the royal lands in Wales were under the control of Edward III’s son, Edward the Black Prince. He was renowned as a war leader and spent most of his life fighting to consolidate English control over Aquitaine and much of western France – the first part of the Hundred Years War. Many Welshmen fought for him in the Gascony campaign, and are recorded taking part in the great battles of Crecy and Poitiers. It was a source of cash for local men, who would enlist as soldiers for the Black Prince, or another local Welsh ‘captain’. The pay, in 1345, for the lowest grade of spearman, was 2d a day, with 3d for trained archers, and this pay began at the port of embarkation. One account tells of a hundred men waiting at Conwy for their pay, but when it did not arrive they disbanded and went home. Although mortality among these mercenary soldiers was high, enough of them returned home with experience of fighting and plunder, to bring an unruly element into local communities that were already seething with discontent.

So far, there is no evidence that Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch went to France, but many *uchelwyr*, or local Welsh squires of similar status took part in the campaigns. A few were rewarded by the English King for their bravery, or their role in the campaign.

It was often hard to distinguish between official levies, and bands of irregular soldiers known as ‘*Routiers*’. Most soldiers of this period lacked regular pay, which led to pillaging and living off the land. This could become an attractive way of life, compared to the hardships and political climate at home in Wales, and some Welsh captains became leaders of these free companies. One famous example is Owain Lawgoch, a descendant of Llywelyn, the last Prince of Wales. Owain fought on the French side at the battle of Poitiers, and in 1372 persuaded the French King to finance an invasion to help him to claim his inheritance as rightful Prince of Wales. There was enough support for him in Wales to worry the English administration, but he never got further than Guernsey, and eventually was murdered by an English agent in France while besieging a town in Poitou.

If Owain Lawgoch had provided hope for the Welsh in the 1370s, it was not long before Owain Glyndŵr became the focus of a real rebellion in 1400. There was unrest in Wales for many reasons, but the return home of the Welsh mercenaries – *Gwenoliaid Cymreig* - as the bards called them, gave Owain Glyndŵr the support of tough and battle seasoned veterans for his forces.

After the Glyndŵr rising there was still a need for Welsh mercenaries in France, and the Agincourt campaign of Henry V saw many Welsh captains on the payroll. Some of these had been active supporters of Owain Glyndŵr, including Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch's grandson, **Hywel Coetmor**. But recruitment now was not by the unpopular demand from the King for levies; the Crown now negotiated with individual 'captains' to raise their own local bands of troops. The attraction of plunder and wages was always a draw, but by the 15th century, warfare had become more professional, and later on, there was every opportunity for Welsh mercenaries to distinguish themselves in the bloody Wars of the Roses.

Life in Nant Conway

After the Edwardian conquest, local people continued to hold their land in the same way as they had under Welsh rule, and members of the old families, like Gruffudd ap Dafydd Goch, had to render military service and rents to the English crown instead of to their former Welsh Prince. The traditional Welsh systems of civil law and land inheritance were still permitted in these parts of the Principality of Wales, although inheritance of land by all male heirs (*cytir* or joint tenancy) was beginning to die out at this time.

Although Welsh civil law prevailed at this time, the English conquerors had been adamant that English criminal law should be enforced. This was very unpopular, and much abused by the King's officials, who used it to exert their control over the population and to raise money by fines. Under former Welsh law, acts like theft and homicide were punished within the community or tribe, with fines between families and sanctions to enforce them.

A graphic example of this tension may be seen in a petition to King Edward II, dated 1320. The King's Justice in Wales fined four local commotes, including Nant Conway, for the crimes of an outlaw named Gogh, and ordered them to take him dead or alive. A local man, William ap Gruffudd ap Tudur pursued the felon and beheaded him – but the fines were still levied, which was regarded as unjust and highhanded in the eyes of all the inhabitants.

In the 1340's there were several acts of open defiance against the King's officials: serious rioting against English 'colonists' in Rhuddlan; the murder of the Sheriff of Merioneth in 1344; and on St Valentine's Day 1345, the ambush and murder of Henry de Shaldeforde, the Prince of Wales attorney in North Wales on his way from Harlech to Caernarfon.

Nant Conwy cannot have remained unaffected by this general unrest. If one adds the problems of bad harvests; the Black Death; and the demands from the Prince's Justiciar in Caernarfon, for money and men to fight in the French Wars, it was not easy for the poorest bondsman in a thatched hut in the hills, or for an *uchwelyr* (gentleman) like **Gruffydd**, who probably lived in a stone house, with tenants and retainers to support. Llanrwst, which was developing as a local market town on the Denbighshire side of the river, suffered very badly from the Black Death around 1350, and took years to recover.

Conclusion

In 1390, Hywel is named in a Bond²⁴ issued from the Court of Richard II (which is still preserved in the National Archives, London). This shows that there was local resentment at the direct appointment of an Englishman to be parson of the church in Llanrwst. This William Broun petitioned the King that he had been physically prevented from taking up his living by Hywel's father, Gruffydd Fychan, and his sons.

In the generation leading up to this confrontation, Nant Conwy had seen its share of problems – bad harvests, unsettling changes in the pattern of authority, and outbreaks of plague – *Y farwolaeth fawr* - which wiped out many local communities in the 1350s. After the abortive rebellion by supporters of Owain Lawgoch in the 1370s, and many smaller incidents, the pressures built up, so that when Owain Glyn Dŵr raised the flag of rebellion in 1400 there was understandable support for him in the Conwy valley.

Both Hywel and his brother, Rhys Gethin were active leaders in Glyn Dŵr's long and complex campaign, and must have taken their local followers with them to fight in many parts of Wales. At first, the effects of the war on Nant Conwy were limited, but in 1402 Henry IV returning home after a difficult march into North Wales, laid waste to the Conwy Valley, damaging the Abbey of Aberconwy at Maenan and 'destroying the vill of Llanrwst'. It was this event that probably provided Sir John Wynn with the memorable quotation in his History of the Gwydir family, c. 1600, although he ascribes the desolation to Glyn Dŵr and not the English.

Owen Glyndoores wars, beginning in Anno 1400, continued fifteen years, which brought such desolation that green grass grew in the market-place in llanroost called Brin-y-Botten, and the deer fed in the churchyard of llanroost, as it is reported, for it was Owen Glyndoore's policie to bringe all thinges to wast that the Englishe should find not strength or restinge place in the Country...

As the revolt petered out after 1407 we can imagine the local communities being punished for supporting Owain Glyn Dŵr. Large fines in exchange for pardons were levied on whole counties and shared amongst everyone who had supported the rebellion. Rhys Gethin reportedly died in battle, but it would have been quite possible for Hywel Coetmor to lie low, retain his lands, and eventually to be pardoned, however no such records have yet been found. Some historians report that he then fought for the English at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, but again there is no proof of this.

Life for local Welsh people in Nant Conwy did not improve much for several generations after the plague and unrest of the 14th Century. Henry V upheld the laws that discriminated against the Welsh and raised even more revenue from Wales to support his costly French wars. At a local level there were fewer serfs or bondsmen to work the land, and the older systems of land tenure and obligation were beginning to collapse. After the Conwy valley was fought over once again during the Wars of the Roses (1455-85), economic conditions became even harder, and it is no surprise that Hywel's son, Dafydd ap Hywel Coetmor, sold his family lands to Maredudd Wynn c.1460-1525 from Dolwyddelan, the up-and-coming ancestor of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir.²⁵

24. Nov.23 1390 Westminster (14 Richard II – Calendar of Close Rolls 1389-92)

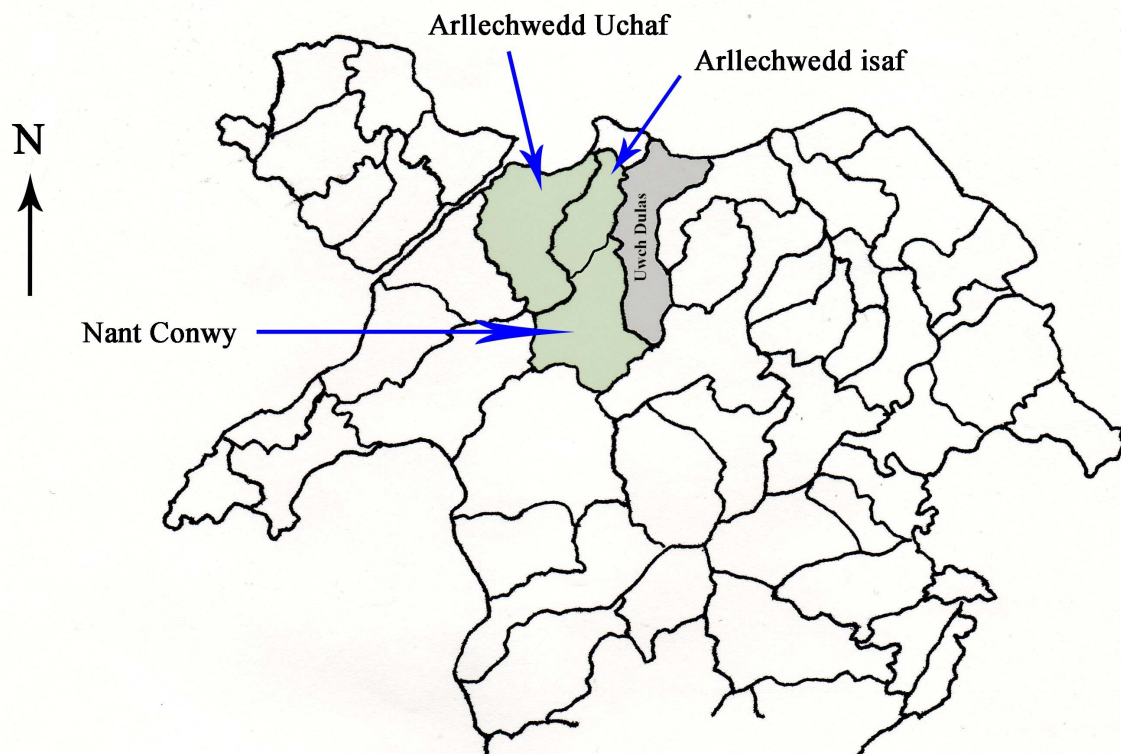
25. Lloyd – History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog Vol.4 p.276

Appendices

Nant Conway - Early Background History

In the early middle ages, the cantref of Arllechwedd and its commotes, was part of the Kingdom of Gwynedd held by the Welsh princes. It was the largest and most dominant of the native Welsh Principalities. Its borders varied over time. For administrative purposes, it was divided into cantrefws (*cantrefi*) which were further subdivided into commotes (*cymydau*). To the east of the River Conwy was the cantref of Rhos with the bordering commote of Uwch Dulas.

The Cantref of Arllechwedd & its Commotes



In 1284, following the conquest of Wales in 1282-83 by Edward I, the Statute of Rhuddlan divided the Principality of North Wales into the counties of Anglesey, Merionethshire, Caernarfonshire and Flintshire. At the local level, commotes became Hundreds, but their customs, boundaries and offices remained largely unchanged.

The river Conwy was an important administrative boundary. On the west bank was the new county of Caernarfonshire, firmly under the control of the English crown – the King himself, or the Prince of Wales. The local commote, or *cymwd*, of Nant Conwy was a smaller area stretching from below Trefriw, up to Betws-y-coed, Dolwyddelan and Penmachno. These townships were linked by a route which ran down the western side of the river to Conwy - a new borough created by Edward I with a walled town and castle where the burgesses and inhabitants were restricted to people of English descent. Llanrwst, by contrast, was on the east bank of the river in the commote of Uwch

Dulas, formerly in the cantref of Rhos and subsequently part of the Lordship of Denbigh, the control of which was disputed between the powerful Mortimer and Montague families throughout much of the period.

Llanrwst was not a town or borough, but its church, and its position where routes converged and the river could be crossed, made it a natural centre where local people met to exchange goods. Petitions from the merchants of Conwy to the English Crown during this period show that their official market was often boycotted by the local Welsh who avoided the tolls and charges by using places like Llanrwst.

On the land, the local population lived much as they had done under the Welsh Princes a hundred years before. It was subsistence agriculture, with oats (corn) grown where possible, and cattle and other livestock providing other food and income. Many people were poor bondsmen, owing rent and obligations of service to the Crown, or to the native Welsh landholders. There were some small freemen, but the leaders of local society were the free tenants who claimed descent from the Welsh dynasties or tribal leaders of earlier times. Hywel Coetmor was undoubtedly one of these leaders, sometimes named *barwniaid* (barons) by the local bards.

Although the traditional Welsh systems of civil law and land inheritance were still permitted in these parts Wales, there was always resentment at the levies and taxation imposed by the English officials, and by the use of English law to exert control over the population.

The Ancestry of Nefydd Hardd

Nefydd Hardd

Nefydd Hardd b.abt.1105 of Penmachno, Nant Conwy, Caernarfonshire was descended from **Heilig ap Glannog** who, in the 10th century, held most of North Gwynedd east of Arfon and north of Ardudwy, including Arllechwedd, Nant Conwy, Rhos, Rhufoniog and part of Dyffryn Clwyd west of the Clwyd river, 'of the Princes'. Heilig was a descendant of Cunedda Wledig, progenitor of the royal dynasty of Gwynedd.

385	Cunedda Wledig ap Edyrn progenitor of the royal dynasty	
	I	of Gwynedd
415	Einion Yrth	
	I	
445	Owain Ddantgwyn	
	I	
480	Cynglas	
	I	
515	Meig	
	I	
550	Cyngen	
	I	
580	Cadwallon Crisban	
	I	
615	Idgwyn	
	I	
645	Einion	
	I	
680	Rhufon	
	I	
715	Meirion	
	I	
745	Caradog, obit 798	
	I	
785	Hywel, obit 825	
	I	
820	Caradog Freich Fras [1]	
	I	
855	Gwgan Glededyfrudd	
	I	
885	Gwaithfoed	
	I	
915	Glannog	
	I	
950	Heilig	
	I	
985	Rychwyn	
	I	
1015	Sir Iestyn	
	I	
1045	Ysbwys	
	I	
1075	Ieuan	
	I	
1105	Nefydd Hardd	

Nefydd was the founder of the 6th Noble Tribe of North Wales.

'The Five Royal Tribes of Wales' and 'The Fifteen Noble Tribes of North Wales' refer to a class of genealogical lists which were compiled by Welsh Bards in the mid 15th century. The earliest reference to these tribes is 1493, although there are references to the tribal chieftains before this date. All but one of the Noble Tribe chieftains can trace their ancestry back to the royal families. Practically all gentry of North Wales were descended from one of the fifteen tribal chieftains. This helps to identify the genealogical group to which an individual or a family belongs.

The fifteen nobles all came from Gwynedd (Anglesey, Caernarfonshire, Merionethshire, Flintshire & Denbighshire)

1. Hwfa ap Cynddelw of Anglesey
2. Llywarch ap Bran of Anglesey
3. Gweirydd ap Rhys Goch of Anglesey
4. Cilmin Troed-DDu of Caernarfonshire
5. Collwyn ap Tangno of Merionethshire said to have lived at Harlech.
- 6. Nefydd Hardd of Caernarfonshire**
7. Maelog ap Cynan of Caernarfonshire
8. Marchudd ap Cynan of Caernarfonshire and Denbighshire
9. Hedd Molwynog of Denbighshire
10. Braint Hir of Denbighshire
11. Marchweithian of Denbighshire
12. Edwin of Tegaingl of Flintshire
13. Ednowain Bendew of Flintshire
14. Eunydd of Gwerngwy of Denbighshire
15. Ednowain ap Bradwen of Merionethshire

There are several accounts about how Nefydd Hardd fell out of favour with Owain Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales. This is one of them:-

NEFYDD HARDD, of Nant Conwy, lived in the time of Owain Gwynedd, who gave Idwal his son to be fostered by him; but Nefydd, for what cause I know not, caused Dunawd his son to kill the young prince, at a place called of him Cwm Idwal. Wherefore Nefydd and his posterity were degraded, and of gentlemen were made bond-men of Nant Conwy. His son Rhûn, to expiate that foul murder, gave the lands whereon the church of Llanrwst was built, whose grand-child, (and Madoc Gôch ap Iorwerth ap Gwrgynon ap Cyfnerth, his son) were stewards to Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Wales, (as Griffith Hiraethog says.) He dwelled at Crygnant, as I take it, near Llanrwst.²⁶

After Heilig's death, his lands and lordship were divided between his 3 sons: Gwrydr Goch (father of Llywarch Hwlbwrch) became Lord of Rhos; **Rychwyn (ancestor of Nefydd Hardd) became Lord of Nant Conwy**; and Pasgen became lord of Arllechwedd.

26. The History of the parishes of Whiteford, and Holywell – Thomas Pennant 1726-1798 Appendix

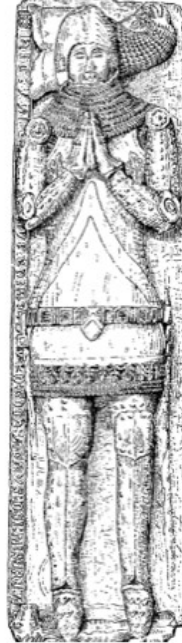
Development of Armour



Unnamed Knight -Tremeirchion, c. 1295
Pourpoint or quilted protective garment . Gloves. Steel helmet under head covering.



Meurig ab Ynyr Fychan Towy, c.1345
Chainmail coif over head. Long mail hauberk to knees. First appearance in North Wales of plate armour on legs.



Gruffydd ab Dafydd Goch Betws-y-coed, c. 1385
Helmet with hanging mail neck protection (camail). Plate armour on both arms and legs. Probably a breastplate under the tight-waisted cloth jupon.



Hywel Coetmor, Llanrwst, c. 1440
Pointed helmet with mail neck protection. The armour on body, arms and legs has hinged pieces, with fine gauntlets and sabatons on his feet. Decorative besegaws, or discs, over armpits.

Praise for Hywel Coetmor of Nanconwy

*Hywel, a Welshman descended from Welshmen,
Hywel, to the war he is turning,
Coetmor, a leader under the planet
4 Mars for the host, mighty far and wide.
A pure man who would be praised in England,
In France he used to strike down Frenchmen;
He would obtain there, leading the way for the host,
8 The best weapons to cherish.
An unstoppable captain in the front line,
A irreproachable, strong, prominent stag,
Exercising his vigour in battles
12 He made people fear him, he was fearless himself.
A steadfast esquire who is adroit,
Great is this wall of battle, a nurturer of skill.
There are arms and men, countless as the trees,
16 And his kinsmen in his fortresses.
I find him to be a lord descended from mighty men,
The healthy stock of the province of Uchaf.
Lion and upholder of the flame-red
20 Gruffudd Fychan, his shield a golden board.
Hywel, like the seal of Prince Llywelyn,
An elegant onslaught of spears,
Prompt, with an arm like that of Hywel y Pedolau,
24 Vigorous his assault,
With a hero's aspect, a great man in battle,
They flee from this man, cringing and scattered,
An esquire worth as much as nine others,
28 Who is pure, a shield deserving to be gilded.*

*Hywel with the sparks rising
And the shattered fragments where his ashen spears were
broken;
Gentle, full peace there was*

32 *After that array, by my oath.*
 Coetmor the shield, under Richard
 He used to receive his rightful employment, the just
 guardian,
 And now, in tribulation,
 36 *Our neighbour has taken strength,*
 A bold lion cutting a path,
 All Llanrwst following after him.
 Added to him we shall have both sides of the Conwy
 40 *And the valley, and still he wants more.*
 Keeping watch there over the valleys,
 Keeping watch over the false ones like Hercules was he,
 A fortress, an insistent lion over this country,
 44 *A fortress for trouble, pain for the English.*
 This man is Owain's friend, I know a hundred thousand
 Of lesser fortune and ability and lineage.
 Keeping himself in a place of strength
 48 *Is he, in arms, keen is his look.*
 In blessed, concealing woodlands
 There is a reputation for might, it will remain for this man.
 The fickle men of England, rage as they might,
 52 *Cannot force him to yield as long as he lives.*
 On account of his arms this man blesses himself;
 Let us praise the warrior!
 Ever generous, he is a nobleman,
 56 *He is a cruel arm against enemies.*
 Since no bold man (he would take the prize!)
 Could force Hywel to yield,
 Everyone enjoys (it will not be different)
 60 *Peace for himself this year.*

A few notes

- 18 **Uchaf** *The region of Arllechwedd Uchaf.*
 20 **Gruffudd Fychan** *Hywel Coetmor's father.*
 21 **Llywelyn** *Llywelyn the Great, from whom Hywel Coetmor descended.*
 23 **Hywel y Pedolau** *Famous warrior, 14th century.*

28 *gilded* i.e. he should be made a knight; gold symbolizes knighthood.

33 *Richard* Richard II.

44 *Owain* Glyndŵr

Barry Lewis

21 May 2013

N.B. This translation is based on the text in *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, first edition. The punctuation has been reinterpreted in places to get better sense.



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