

Guto'r Glyn: A Life

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Guto'r Glyn has the distinction of being not only one of the foremost poets of fifteenth-century Wales, but also the earliest Welsh poet for whom it is possible to construct a fairly reliable biography. Unlike his most famous predecessor, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Guto was a professional praise poet. Rather than devoting himself to singing love poems to young women about whom nothing is now known, he sang directly to men whose names and deeds are often recorded in contemporary documents. Furthermore, Guto had a very long career and sang to a number of the most powerful people of the age.

It is likely, however, that only a relatively small proportion of his work has come down to us. Around 120 of his poems survive in the manuscripts (a total of 7569 lines), which is a fairly large number when compared with most poets of the period, though less impressive in relation to the 238 surviving poems of Lewys Glyn Cothi, most of them recorded in his own hand. Bearing in mind that Guto probably lived longer than Lewys, and assuming that he was no less prolific, it is likely that over half his works have been lost. Much of what was once known about him has also been forgotten, including his place of birth, the identity of his bardic teacher and the date of his death.

Even so, the little that survives offers two remarkable features. Firstly there is the long period over which Guto'r Glyn sang; most of the fifteenth century, after the Glyndŵr rebellion, is represented in his work. Secondly there is the wide geographical range of his poetry; as far as is known, the only region of Wales where he was not particularly active was the south-west. Though the evidence is far from complete, vivid glimpses of Guto that we get at particular times and in particular places allow us to piece together an outline of the career of a poet of truly national and international significance.

Rediscovering the poet

The first compilation of Guto's works, *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, was published in 1939 by the University of Wales Press under the editorship of Ifor Williams, the poems having been collected by J. Llywelyn Williams. In subsequent years there have been several studies of the poet's life, most notably by Saunders Lewis (1976) and J.E. Caerwyn Williams (1997). Though these works contain much that is of value, they were of necessity based upon a rather inadequate edition of the poetry that had been prepared and completed in haste, with the Second World War looming (GGI vii). It must now be accepted that much of what has been written about Guto's life is riddled with minor misapprehensions based on inadequate texts of his poems. The only biography written for him (Rees 2008) rests upon the same shaky foundations and, furthermore, is guilty of spreading some new misapprehensions of its own. The present study, which has the advantage of drawing upon the new, more thorough edition of the poems, aims to lay to rest some of these past misconceptions and to place studies of Guto's life on a firmer foundation. Even so, much uncertainty remains and it is hoped that this study will encourage others to address the problems that remain.

The life of a poet in the fifteenth century

Before considering Guto's career specifically, it is worth outlining what is known about the activities of the professional poets of his day. Their function, in essence, was to entertain their patrons. These were men of varying status, from great noblemen such as William Herbert of Raglan, who became the first earl of Pembroke, to minor squires such as Phylib ap Gwilym

Llwyd of Tregunter. But they were all *uchelwyr* – men of high lineage who owned estates and homes that were comfortable by the standards of the age. Some men of this class would pursue a career in the Church and, once again, their status would vary. Guto sang to the dean of Bangor and to parish priests, and to the abbots of some of the Cistercian houses, who also belonged to local *uchelwr* families. Patronage was also provided by women, on occasion, sometimes in partnership with their husbands, or else by virtue of their status as widows. Some exceptional patrons must also be mentioned, such as John Talbot, second earl of Shrewsbury, and above all King Edward IV. It is unlikely that these eminent men could speak Welsh, and it could be argued that the poems addressed to them were in fact performed for their local followers instead; or, if they themselves were indeed present at the performance, then they might have been provided with an English summary either beforehand or afterwards. In the 1470s Guto received payment for services rendered as a minstrel to Edward, Prince of Wales, at Shrewsbury, so the possibility that the poems to the earl and the king were indeed performed in their presence should not be ruled out too hastily.

A poet's main task was to praise his patron in verse. This kind of poetry, praise poetry, is so central to the poets' function that it is almost synonymous with their craft. One fairly common name for the praise poetry was *y glod* 'the praise'. The verb *prydu* was also used. The original meaning of this verb was 'to form' or 'to shape', but it came to mean 'to compose praise poetry', specifically. There are also references to *cywydd gŵr* (literally 'man's poem'), while Guto calls himself a *prydydd gŵr* 'man's poet'. These terms embody an important truth about the praise poetry: it is above all a celebration of masculinity. The qualities praised are those which characterized the ideal man, namely: courage on the battlefield; strength in defending his own interests and ensuring the wellbeing of his dependants; generosity and kindness towards the deserving (such as his own followers, the poets, and guests in general); and a commitment to justice and to maintaining order and fairness within society. These ideas are expressed clearly in the topos *gwrdd wrth wrdd, gwâr wrth wâr* 'fierce to the fierce, gentle to the gentle' which occurs repeatedly in the poetry. The behaviour of the ideal man should vary according to the nature of those with whom he interacted. He should show strength and audacity or even cruelty towards those who would challenge him, but was expected to treat his friends and followers, and likewise the weak and defenceless – namely all women and those seeking charity – with boundless generosity and a smiling countenance. These qualities were closely associated with high lineage. In medieval society it was generally believed that it was lineage that guaranteed possession of such virtues, as well as determining an individual's right to inherit his family's land and social status. This is why it features so prominently in the praise poetry.

Although the themes of the praise poetry are quite narrow and repetitive, there is endless variation in the expression of the act of praise. No praise poem, whether it be an *awdl* (ode) or a *cywydd*, adheres slavishly to a pre-existing pattern, and there is variation in the choice of themes, the order in which they are presented, the imagery and means of expression, and the emphases. Different genres, or sub-genres, can be recognised within the praise poetry. Request poems were sung to solicit a favour or a gift, either for the poet himself or on behalf of a patron, and there were also poems of thanks which showed appreciation for such acts of generosity. Other poems were sung to celebrate a wedding or the building of a new house. But the most important and noteworthy of the sub-genres was the elegy, sung not only to commemorate the deceased but also to ensure that the poets' source of patronage would continue into the next generation.

Entertainment, in the widest sense of the word, is what the praise poetry provided. There were also other types of poetry that were not so closely connected with the praise of individuals. One means of generating amusement was to set poets up to satirize one another. Guto took part in several bardic debates (*ymrysonau*). The humour in these debates was based upon lively exaggeration and the witty, original use of imagery. The set topics could be quite near the knuckle, such as accusing another poet of exaggeration and of spreading lies, of showing a lack of boldness, of being a careless drunkard or of suffering from some unpleasant illness. The appearance and effectiveness of the sexual organs were not off limits either.

Guto's surviving poetry is noteworthy amongst that of other fifteenth-century poets because it is restricted, to all intents and purposes, to the genres mentioned above. We do not have any love poems or religious verses of his, except for one religious *cywydd* which, as Guto himself admits, was sung at the behest of a clerical patron who had complained that the poet did not pay sufficient attention to the state of his own soul (poem 118). Perhaps Guto was not accustomed to concern himself with these genres, though it would be rash to argue this on the basis of the proportion of his work that has come down to us. He certainly seems to have been familiar with the conventions of both religious poetry and love poetry, judging by his poem to the priest of Merthyr Tydfil (poem 16), which portrays the relationship between him and his (female) patron saint as if it were a love affair, and the light-hearted *cywydd* concerning the love of Gwladus of Glyn-nedd (poem 34).

The practical aspects of the poets' craft are very difficult to recreate today from the inadequate evidence that has survived. There is a temptation to turn to sixteenth-century documents, which say more about the work, organization and rules of the bardic order, but it is difficult to know how reliable this material is when applied to the fifteenth century. It is safer to rely upon the evidence of Guto and his contemporaries.

We do not know how a man came to be a poet in fifteenth-century Wales. It is clear that some poets followed family tradition, such as the sons of Hywel Swrdwal, Tudur Penllyn and Huw Cae Llwyd. But we have no evidence that Guto's father had followed the same profession as his son, and this is also true of many other poets. The poets' education is a huge gap in our knowledge, and the little that can be gathered, or rather guessed, is discussed below. We also do not know how a poet would go about developing his network of patrons when he first started out, though the likelihood is that he was expected to follow his master from house to house before venturing forth on his own.

Professional poets spent a lot of time on the road and sometimes sang of the tribulations they endured whilst travelling. They would visit their patrons on three regular occasions during the year, namely Christmas, Easter and Whitsun – the three special feasts that are often mentioned. Poets would also visit on saints' days, particularly on the festival of the parish's patron saint. Other events that might occasion a visit were weddings, the building of a new house and, much more frequently, deaths. Elegies were not necessarily sung during the funeral itself nor during any feast that took place immediately afterwards. In the first place it would take time for the sad news to reach the poet's ears wherever he might happen to be, and then he would need time to compose a worthy elegy, and even more time to travel to the home of the deceased. Memorial services were held a month and a year after the death – the 'month's mind' and the 'year's mind' – and it may be that elegies were generally sung on these occasions. Apart from these special circumstances, it is unclear whether a poet could just drop in on a patron, or whether some homes were always open to them – perhaps that is the meaning of the word *rhydd* 'free' which Guto uses several times whilst praising particular houses that provided him with

patronage (13.1–8). How, too, would a poet know that he would be welcome? *Gwahoddion* or ‘invitations’ are sometimes mentioned, which suggests an expectation that a poet would wait to be invited (47.17–20; 55.1–8; 63.1–2).

Another interesting question is where a poet would stay overnight when he was on a journey to a particular destination. Could he call at a patron’s house even though he had no specific poem prepared for him? There is reason to suppose that he could, and that he would offer other poems in exchange for his food and lodging – perhaps some verses of Dafydd ap Gwilym, which certainly seem to have been in demand according to one of Guto’s *cywyddau* for Henry Griffith of Newcourt (poem 35). If so, then some visits could be less formal than others. It is not at all clear how long a poet was expected to reside in each house, and indeed this is likely to have varied depending on the patron’s resources, generosity or patience. It is possible that Guto did not have a home of his own at every stage of his career, particularly in the early years, and that, instead, he spent all his time travelling from one patron’s house to the next. Perhaps Strata Florida abbey, or Raglan, offered him shelter for an extended period. In any case, it is likely enough that Guto did have a permanent home somewhere. We know that he lived in Oswestry at some time in his career.

The poetry of Guto and his contemporaries would have been performed orally, in front of the patron and in the presence of a wider audience. The evidence upon which this statement is based is drawn entirely from the poems themselves, although only written copies of these are available, and there is therefore a danger of circular argument in insisting on the oral nature of the poetry. Even so, the references in the poetry to public performance – including the particular occasions, the musical accompaniment and the poets’ custom of visiting their patrons in order to benefit from their hospitality – are so numerous that there is no need for any great concern over this question. There is a need, however, to consider the poet’s relationship with the written texts. Guto mentions reading books with his patrons, particularly Rhys ap Siancyn of Glynedd (poem 15). Amongst these was the *Brut*, probably one of the Welsh versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s ‘*Historia Regum Britanniae*’, along with saints’ lives, Triads and *ystorïau*, that is, prose tales that might be religious as well as secular. Also mentioned is earlier poetry – specifically, the works of Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr – which, it may well be supposed, would have been old-fashioned and hard to understand by Guto’s day, even for an educated poet. And yet, Rhys ap Siancyn was the teacher and Guto the pupil, according to the poem at least. We may assume that Guto was literate, though there is no definite proof of this. It would be interesting to know whether any of his patrons asked for written copies of his verses. Only one manuscript survives from his own day that contains a collection of his poems, namely Peniarth 57, which was probably commissioned by Abbot Rhys of Strata Florida. The texts it contains all appear to be more or less faultless and they may well derive from recitations or texts provided by Guto – indeed, it is not impossible that one of the two scribes who copied them was Guto himself (Johnston 2013: 22).

His name

Guto is a familiar form of the name *Gruffudd* (Morgan and Morgan 1985: 102–5), though there is no evidence that he was ever known by this more standard form of the name. In all likelihood he was *Guto* from the beginning, though some of his fellow poets refer to him by another, similar pet name, *Gutun*, generally when they need to for the sake of the *cynganedd* (101a.1n). Some twentieth-century scholars believed that there were two different poets called Guto’r Glyn and Guto ap Siancyn, but it has now been established that they were one and the same (Salisbury 2007a). Guto ap Siancyn was the name the poet used at the start of his career, but he soon adopted the cognomen of his father, Siancyn y Glyn. Siancyn’s first name, like that of

his son, is a pet name, in this instance derived from *Ieuan* (Morgan and Morgan 1985: 137–8). The earliest evidence of Guto's name is in the Peniarth 57 manuscript, which was written before c.1440 and is associated with Strata Florida. Here, poems are ascribed to *Gutto ap Jankyn*. This information is confirmed in a *cywydd* by Ieuan ap Hywel Swardwal, perhaps dating from the period c.1437–41 (see below). Ieuan calls him *Y Guto* 'the Guto', *eos y Glyn* 'the nightingale of the Glyn' and *Guto'r mawl* 'Guto of the praise' and refers to him as *mab Siancyn y Glyn* 'the son of Siancyn y Glyn' (GHS 24.38, 42, 54, 62). There is further support for these forms in two later attributions. One of these, *y gyto ab siankyn y glyn*, was written in an unknown hand beneath a semi-satirical *cywydd* to Henry Griffith of Newcourt in Herefordshire (poem 35) in manuscript Peniarth 55 (c.1500). The other is in LIGC 16964A (c.1600–50) in the hand of Thomas Rees of Carmarthen, ascribing to *Gytto ssiankyn y glyn* a *cywydd* to request a sallet from and on behalf of some north-eastern gentry patrons (poem 73). The connections of Peniarth 57, Peniarth 55 and LIGC 16964A with south Wales suggest that the early form of Guto's name was remembered for a longer period in some southern regions.

Guto's name was written as *Gitto Glyn* on a muster roll for the army of Richard duke of York in late May, 1441, probably by an English official in Portsmouth who omitted the definite article ([y]r) and treated *Glyn* as a surname according to the English custom (Salisbury 2007a: 1). Three other contemporary instances of his name survive. The first two belong to the same context, namely two occasions between 1476 and 1478 when Guto received payment, along with one *Walter Harper*, for his services as a minstrel in Shrewsbury (discussed below). As was the case with the muster roll of 1441, the definite article is absent since it was, in all probability, an Englishman who wrote *Gutto Glyn* here. The third example is an attribution, in the hand of the poet Hywel Dafi, beneath a *cywydd* to request a hunting horn from and on behalf of *uchelwyr* from the north-east (poem 99) in manuscript Peniarth 67 (c.1483). The form used there is *Gytto or glynn*.

It was as *Guto'r Glyn*, therefore, that he was generally known after c.1440, as is apparent from the works of five of his fellow poets who referred to him by that name: Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf (93.3–4), Hywel Dafi (18a.68), Dafydd ab Edmwnd (68a.10), Llywelyn ap Gutun (65a.2) and Gutun Owain (126.6, 23). As seen in some of the examples mentioned above, the definite article was sometimes used when referring to him by his first name only; that is, *y Guto* 'the Guto'. This form occurs in the works of Hywel Dafi (18a.9, 59; 20a.60) and Llywelyn ap Gutun (65a.49, 54) and, indeed, in Guto's own works when he refers to himself (113.31; 114.61). It was mostly pet names, such as Guto, Dai or Bedo, that were preceded by the article in this manner (TC 3; Morgan and Morgan 1985: 34).

His lineage

The fact that *Guto* used a familiar form rather than the standard form of his name, *Gruffudd*, is consistent with the absence of his lineage from the genealogies. There is a strong suggestion that he did not belong to the same rank in society as his patrons. Little is known about his lineage save for the name of his father, Siancyn y Glyn, and his third cousin, Gruffudd ap Dafydd. Gruffudd was one of three younger poets who sought to dislodge Guto from Valle Crucis abbey, according to a poem Guto sang in his old age, where the blood relationship between the two is described as *[c]erennydd gron* 'a full relation'. Until this Gruffudd can be identified (for a discussion, see 116.31–3n), we remain reliant upon other, less specific references to his lineage, such as the one in Guto's poem. Guto sang this *cywydd* in order to chastise Gruffudd and the two others, arguing that he himself was the superior poet in spite of the fact that they were *Uwch o waed achau* 'more elevated ... as regards the blood of their lineage' (116.49). Since he himself was related to one of them, it may be supposed that Guto

was not entirely lacking in means and family connections and that his forebears included *uchelwyr* as well as humbler folk.

There is some further evidence for Guto's mixed lineage in his short bardic debate with Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf (poem 93), where he acknowledges that he is of humbler stock than his fellow poet. And yet, bearing in mind that Ieuan was a direct descendant of the princes of Gwynedd, this says little about Guto's own status. His lineage was not ridiculed by any of the poets who sang satirical *cywyddau* to him and, furthermore, he would hardly have been able to obtain a bardic education if his family had not been reasonably well off. It may simply be that Siancyn y Glyn was a minor *uchelwr* whose lineage was not preserved. But the possibility must be considered, also, that he was not an *uchelwr* but rather a bondman of some kind in the service of an *uchelwr*, someone who was tied to the land but who might, in special circumstances, gain his freedom (Carr 1982: 128, 144–50). It is not impossible that Siancyn y Glyn did just that, in the wake of the hardship that followed the outbreaks of the plague in Wales in the second half of the fourteenth century. There was also significant social restructuring following the failure of Owain Glyndŵr's revolt, when many bondmen went about purchasing their freedom, taking advantage of the loss of power by some *uchelwyr* (Davies 1995: 318–19).

Remaining with the subject of Owain Glyndŵr, an interesting possibility concerning Guto's father must be considered. Llawdden sang a *cywydd* to request a sword and buckler from Phylib ap Rhys, a son-in-law of Owain, on behalf of one Siancyn y Glyn. In this poem Siancyn is referred to as a *brawd o gyfraith* 'brother in law' of the patron and as a [c]âr 'kinsman, friend' of his wife, Gwenllïan; she was a daughter of Owain Glyndŵr. It is likely, then, that Siancyn was her brother and an illegitimate son of Owain, who was often known as Owain y Glyn (GLI 181). The possibility that Guto was born in Glyndyfrdwy is discussed below, though no final conclusion can be drawn. Since we know that he was the son of a man named Siancyn y Glyn, it is striking that a man of that same name was the son of the most renowned inhabitant of Glyndyfrdwy. Even so, bearing in mind the references to Guto's relatively humble lineage noted earlier, it is rather unlikely that he really was a grandson of Owain Glyndŵr, the foremost descendant of the Welsh princes in his day.

His original home

The location of *Y Glyn* ('the Glen' or 'the Valley') in the name Guto'r Glyn is uncertain. One recent suggestion was Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, since a man named Guto ap Siancyn ap Llawdden was active in the cantref of Penweddig c.1434–46 (Salisbury 2009: 58–60), but there is no further evidence to support the idea that Guto came from Ceredigion. It is generally believed that his original home was Glyn Ceiriog, since this was Ifor Williams's opinion in his introduction to *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (GGL xxii), but the evidence is not as conclusive as might be expected.

Ifor Williams relied upon the opening lines of Guto's *cywydd* in praise of the town of Oswestry, which mention that he had been a [b]laeneuwr 'inhabitant of hill country' in his youth (102.1). Ifor Williams argued that his home should be sought in the nearby hills, in line with the fact that Guto had sung most of his poems to 'men of Powys and the March' and had described Syr Rhys, whom Ifor Williams associated with Whittington, near Oswestry, as *f'eglwyswr i* 'my priest' and [f]y nghurad 'my curate' (101.13, 14). It is certainly true that it was in the north-east, particularly the region around Llangollen, that Guto sang most of his poems according to the evidence of the manuscripts. Even so, this fact cannot be relied upon to any great degree since more texts have survived from the north-east than from any other part of Wales. It was in this corner of the country that substantial amounts of poetry were preserved in manuscripts

from the sixteenth century onwards, giving the impression that the patronage given to poets in other regions was scant in comparison. Lewys Glyn Cothi's poems, on the other hand, demonstrate that there was ample patronage available to poets in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire but, owing to poor local preservation, most of the poems sung in that part of the country were lost. Most of Guto's early poems relate to the South, but that is not reason enough to believe that he was a southerner. Furthermore, though Syr Rhys may be associated with Whittington, Guto's references to him do not bear any special significance beyond demonstrating that the two were living in the Oswestry region when that particular poem was sung. There is no certainty, therefore, that Guto was referring specifically to the uplands west of Oswestry in the opening of his *cywydd* to that town.

Ifor Williams drew attention to one other piece of evidence to support his argument in favour of Glyn Ceiriog, namely a reference in an article dating from 1879 to Guto's having been born there, 'whence he derived the appellation ... of Guto (or Griffith) of the Glen' (Lloyd 1879: 43). No doubt this information, and likewise the similar information published in the works of a host of antiquarians from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards (cf. Watkin 1920: 66; Huws 2011: 57), was drawn from a small book on the history of Oswestry published in 1819 under the name of that famous antiquarian from the parish of Whitford in Flintshire, Thomas Pennant (Pennant 1819: 35):

Gutto or Griffith a native of Glyn Ceiriog, who lived in the middle of the fifteenth century ...

Guto is mentioned in this book in connection with his *cywydd* in praise of Oswestry, parts of which are quoted in translation. Pennant died in 1798, so the book was brought through the press by Thomas Edwards (who died in 1871), an Oswestry printer who, according to the book's title, was responsible for providing Pennant's work with 'Notes and Considerable Additions' (Watkin 1920: 85, 198). At present it is unclear which of the two, Pennant or Edwards, was the author of the information about Guto. If it was Pennant, it seems the information should be traced back to local tradition that was extant in the early 1770s, when he was travelling Wales collecting the material that would later be published in his *Tours of Wales* (1778–83). Guto is not mentioned, however, in the section of that famous work that deals with Oswestry, so it is possible that it was Edwards who recorded the information in 1819. Since little is known about Edwards, except that he succeeded his father in the printing trade and was appointed mayor of Oswestry in 1853 (Cathrall 1885: 166; Watkins 1920: 187, 198), we can only guess at whether or not he drew upon local tradition.

It seems that such a local tradition concerning Guto was current in the Glyn Ceiriog area in the early decades of the twentieth century, when William Rhys Jones (Gwenith Gwyn), a Baptist minister in the village between 1912 and 1923, recorded the belief that the poet had been born in that part of the parish of Llangollen known as *Traian* [sic] *y Glyn*, or in local parlance *Y Glyn*, that is, the part of the parish that lies within the Ceiriog valley (LIGC Papurau Gwenith Gwyn I, 330; Huws 2011: 57–8). This connects Guto with a fairly well-known region that was close to but separate from Glyn Ceiriog, and it is easy to believe that Glyn Ceiriog could have displaced Traean y Glyn in relation to Guto because the former was better known outside the Ceiriog valley.

In any case, despite the attraction of this possible connection with Glyn Ceiriog and Traean y Glyn, only with great caution can it be used as evidence for Guto's birthplace. Bearing in mind how much time elapsed between the fifteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, it is

possible that the origin of the information recorded by Pennant (or Edwards) and Jones alike was an attempt on the part of the inhabitants of the Ceiriog valley to claim the great poet for their own region even though the location of his birthplace had long been forgotten. Considering all the evidence together, it is possible that the belief in a connection between Guto's early life and the Ceiriog valley was based mainly on the fact that this valley lies between Oswestry, where Guto set up home as an adult, and Valle Crucis abbey, where he spent the final years of his life. This kind of consideration can be misleading – it is scarcely likely that anyone would claim that Lewys Glyn Cothi came from north Wales on the basis of the fact that he settled for a while in Chester (GLGC xxvi–xxvii).

Enid Roberts (1977: 14–15) ventured to disagree with Ifor Williams's opinion, arguing that it would be more appropriate to consider Glyndyfrdwy as Guto's place of birth. She refers, without going into detail, to readings in manuscript copies of Guto's *cywydd* of reconciliation to Ieuan Fychan ab Ieuan of Pengwern which were not used in Ifor Williams's edition and which 'suggest that Guto was related to Ieuan Fychan'. On the basis of this assertion, it is argued that Guto could have been related to families with roots in the Dee valley, in spite of the fact that Pengwern lies to the south of Llangollen rather closer to Glyn Ceiriog than to Glyndyfrdwy. In any case, the new edition of the *cywydd*, which is based on the evidence of all the manuscripts (poem 106), does not support the idea that Guto and Ieuan Fychan were related. The main basis of Enid Roberts's argument is the assertion that Glyndyfrdwy was the best-known *glyn* in the period. Glyndyfrdwy, or the shortened form (*Y*) *Glyn*, certainly was used as a surname by its fifteenth-century inhabitants. Guto himself refers to the most famous of them, Owain Glyndŵr, as *Owain Glyn* (52.21–2; 107.46). This, however, is not a strong argument in reality because Glyndyfrdwy's fame, by itself, does not provide sufficient grounds to associate this location with Guto. He would have had the same name had he been born in Glyn Ceiriog or in Traean y Glyn.

Two references to the *glyn* in Guto's name are to be found in eighteenth-century manuscripts which contain some of his poems. The earliest is likely to be in the hand of David Lewis of Coetre, Llanelltyd, and Bronwion, Brithdir (*fl.*1738–*d.*1766). Sometime between 1752 and 1758 he added a note next to Guto's name at the end of his *cywydd* 'Droving' (poem 44) in manuscript Harvard Welsh e 8 (LIGC 16129D): *Glyndyfrdwy maen debygol Glyn ceiriog rwy'n meddwl* 'Glyndyfrdwy probably, Glyn Ceiriog I think'. This bears witness to the uncertainty over Guto's birthplace that existed in Meirionnydd by the mid-eighteenth century. As for the second reference, on the last pages of the Cwrtmawr 10 manuscript (1766) there is an index of poets in the hand of David Ellis of Dolgellau (1736–95) which includes the name *Gutto'r Glynn Dyfrdwy*. As Ellis states on page vi, he wrote the contents of the manuscript when he was living in Llanberis, probably before the period he spent as a curate in Derwen, north of Corwen, sometime between 1764 and 1788 (DWB Online). It is not impossible that the reference to Guto derived from local knowledge in the Dee valley, though it is more likely, in light of the fact that there are at least 80 copies of Guto's poems in Ellis's hand (three are in Cwrtmawr 10, including poem 118 addressed to Abbot Dafydd ab Ieuan), that it was a guess based on Guto's association with Valle Crucis.

In reality, all the evidence presented so far concerning Guto's place of origin is much too recent, and in order to shed further light on the matter it is necessary to consult evidence that is contemporary with the poet himself. As regards Glyn Ceiriog and Glyndyfrdwy, it may be highly significant that the one is in Powys and the other, it appears, in Gwynedd.

There are two references in fifteenth-century manuscripts to a man called *y gutto o bywys* ('the Guto of Powys') or *y gutto powys*. Assuming that both do, indeed, refer to the same man, this Guto was i. a poet who sang a *cywydd* in very strict *cynghanedd* to request a mail shirt from John Abrahall of Gillow, Herefordshire, before c.1443 (poem 120; the earliest copy is in Peniarth 53, c.1484); ii. a man who wrote his name on a copy of 'Brut y Brenhinedd' (c.1330), apparently at Valle Crucis abbey, sometime during the second half of the fifteenth century. At first glance, it seems a remarkable coincidence that Guto'r Glyn, too, sang in praise of *uchelwyr* in Herefordshire and the surrounding regions before c.1443 and that he was associated with Valle Crucis from c.1465 onwards, if not before. If the two were in fact the same man, then his stamping-ground was Powys and it is likely that Glyn Ceiriog and its environs was his home. And yet, it is hard to understand why Guto, who was well known as Guto'r Glyn from c.1441 onwards (see above), should have called himself *y gutto powys* during the second half of the century. It seems much more likely that 'y Guto o Bowys' was a different poet who adopted his second name to avoid confusion with Guto'r Glyn. If so, then locations for the *glyn* in Guto's name must be sought outside Powys.

If Guto was not a Powys man, then the idea that he was born in Glyn Ceiriog or in Traean y Glyn must be set aside and serious consideration given to the possibility that he came from Gwynedd. As Hywel Dafi states, Guto was not a south Walian but rather *Un o feirdd ... / Gwynedd* 'One of the poets of Gwynedd' (20a.39–40). Guto, for his part, refers to Hywel as *un o'r Deheuwyrr* 'one of the Southerners' (20.47), and it is known for a fact that Hywel was raised in the south-east, perhaps in Raglan. And yet, Hywel's intention in referring to Gwynedd is not entirely clear. He sang his *cywydd* in reply to Guto's satire, which ended with the assertion that Guto was an Anglesey man (20.77 *Eled i Fôn, y wlad fau* 'Let him go to Anglesey, my own country'). It is not impossible that Guto had been raised in Anglesey but, as in the case of Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, there is no other evidence to support this. It is unlikely that Guto was referring to the island as the place where he was raised. Instead, Anglesey, famous for its patronage, probably represented the whole of Gwynedd, and no doubt the island's position in the far north of Wales made it useful as a complete geographical opposite to Hywel's home in Gwent. In a *cywydd* in praise of Dafydd ap Gwilym of Llwydiarth in Anglesey, Guto calls the island *Fy nhrigfan, fy nhiriogaeth / ... lle gorau fy maeth, / Fy nghartref, fy nghynefin* 'My dwelling place, my territory / ... where my best sustenance is, / my home, my habitat' and refers to going *Adref unwaith drwy Fenai* 'home once across the river Menai', that is, to Anglesey (62.35–7, 42). It is likely that he is pushing bardic convention to its extreme here in identifying his own home with that of his patron, since Guto maintains in the last line of his poem to Dafydd that his 'soul is in Anglesey' (*enaid ym Môn*, 44). That is, Guto envisages the island as his spiritual home (cf. 65.63–6) because the generosity of its *uchelwyr* is proverbial throughout all Wales. For example, Guto praised Hywel ap Llywelyn Fychan of Glyn Aeron in Ceredigion, a man with no particular connection to Gwynedd, as *Pennaeth byrddau maeth beirdd Môn* 'governor of tables of sustenance for the poets of Anglesey' (10.10; cf. 91.15n). As a result, it is possible that Hywel Dafi, too, was maintaining that same conceit in calling Guto 'One of the poets of Gwynedd' whilst 'on this side of the river Dyfi' (*tu yma i Ddyfi*, 20a.45), having in mind Guto's attachment to Anglesey rather than his actual home.

In spite of the ambiguities, it is unlikely that Hywel would have called Guto 'One of the poets of Gwynedd' if Guto was not closely associated with that part of the country. If a well-known valley in fifteenth-century Gwynedd is sought, then the most obvious candidate by a considerable margin is Glyndyfrdwy, which was part of the commote of Edeirnion (Lewis

2013: 173). This argument, in reality, is the strongest one for locating Guto's home, though no firm conclusion can be drawn on the basis of the currently available evidence.

The only description of the *glyn* in Guto's works provides little guidance. In a poem of thanks addressed to Rhisiart Cyffin, dean of Bangor, he calls himself *y mab o'r Glyn maith* 'the man of the long Glyn' (58.42). The 'long Glyn' could be an apt enough description of any substantial valley, though *maith* could also mean that it was some way away from the dean's residence in Arfon. Indeed, the absence of any enlightening reference to the *glyn* either in Guto's works or in those of his contemporaries calls into question how close Guto's connection with this valley really was. In Lewys Glyn Cothi's famous elegy for his son he refers to the boy as *Siôn y Glyn*, and Lewys himself sometimes used a similar form of his own name, *Lewys y Glyn*, when recording his own poems (GLGC xxii, 237.6). It is not clear whether Siôn y Glyn was born in Glyn Cothi, but it may be that in his case *y Glyn* was a surname which was transferred to the next generation regardless of whether or not that generation had its own connection with Glyn Cothi. Could the same thing have happened in the case of Guto, son of Siancyn y Glyn, with the son's connection with the Glyn being much weaker than his father's? It is worth remembering that Guto ap Siancyn is the name given beneath Guto's *cywyddau* in Peniarth 57, which were written before c.1440, and that *Guto[r] Glyn* is the name in the list of soldiers who sailed to France in 1441. No doubt the English official who wrote that list in two long columns, one for the first names and the other for surnames, asked Guto what was his surname. Could it be that Guto came to the conclusion that 'Glyn', though he had not been accustomed to use this name hitherto, would be a more suitable answer for the official's request than his father's name, Siancyn?

His dates

As discussed below in connection with Guto's early career, it is quite likely that he was active as a poet by c.1431. There is no evidence as to when a young poet who had been trained since childhood might start to earn his living, but it may be guessed that he would not be much younger than fifteen years old. If so, Guto could have been born c.1415, and would have been just over twenty when he composed his earliest surviving poems c.1437.

However, immediately below the name *Gitto Glyn* in the list of soldiers who went to France in 1441 (see below) is the name *Thomas Gitto*. Johnston (2008: 141) suggested that this Thomas could be the poet's son, and that he travelled to Normandy as his father's servant. In the entire list of soldiers, a document that contains over four thousand names, these two men's names are the only instances of the name *Gitto*. It would be a remarkable coincidence to find the two recorded together if there were not some manner of connection between them. If *Thomas Gitto* was a very young lad and was indeed acting as his father's servant (perhaps making arrows for him), it is scarcely likely that his name would be recorded as a soldier on a list of the army's companies. Such a record bore witness to the fact that each soldier had made a formal undertaking to serve the leader of his company for a specific period of time. On that basis Thomas cannot have been younger than about sixteen in 1441, and would have been born c.1425 at the latest (for the ages of soldiers in the Middle Ages, see Boardman 1998: 73, 75, 182). Assuming for the moment that Guto was indeed Thomas's father, he must have been old enough to have a child c.1425, and so Guto's own date of birth should be pushed back to c.1410 or even c.1405. This would mean that Guto was closer to thirty years old when he travelled to France in 1441, and had been born during Owain Glyndŵr's revolt. The work that has been done in dating Guto's poems clearly demonstrates that he worked as a professional poet for six decades between c.1430 and c.1490, and so it would be difficult to argue with his assertion in one of his last poems that *Hynaf oll heno wyf i* 'Tonight I am the very oldest' (117.2). As

discussed below, he sang his last poems during the years after 1485, but there is no certainty as to the exact date of his death. It can only be suggested that he died c.1490 at about eighty years of age, one of a number of great poets who had long lives and died at the close of the century.

His education

Considering the breadth of his knowledge and the brilliance of his craft, in his earliest poems as much as in his final ones, Guto must have had a thorough bardic education when he was very young. In a poem composed when he was an old man at Valle Crucis abbey, he proclaims that he has ‘praised the margins of the earth’ (*Moli bŵm ymylau byd*, 118.9) and ‘blasphemed’ since he was six years old (*[c]ablu er yn chweblwydd*, 118.11) – not literally, perhaps, but these lines do seem to suggest that he was familiar with the poets’ craft before entering his teens. This is reminiscent of Lewys Glyn Cothi’s reference to *fy nghyw yn dysgu fy nghân* ‘my chick learning my song’ in his heart-rending elegy for his son, Siôn y Glyn, who died when he was five years old according to one source (GLGC 237.37 and page 633). Furthermore, according to tradition Rhys Goch Eryri recognised the poetic talent of Dafydd Nanmor when he was a child (Powell 2004: 101–12).

Where, and from whom, Guto received his bardic education remains a matter for speculation. On the basis of the belief that he was born in the Llangollen area (see above), both Strata Marcella (Lewis 1976: 81–2) and Valle Crucis abbey (Huws 2011: 59) have been suggested as possible locations, particularly since more than one Cistercian abbot would later provide him with patronage. It is quite likely that there was a school at Valle Crucis in the second half of the fifteenth century and that it was connected with the Trefor family, Guto’s main patrons in the Dee valley (Thomson 1982: 76–7). Two manuscripts which attest to the existence of a school in the abbey belong to the period c.1460–80s (LIGC 423D; Peniarth 356), when two Welshmen held the office of abbot, Siôn ap Rhisiart and Dafydd ab Ieuan. However, it remains an open question whether there was a similar school there during the early, turbulent years of the century under the patronage of Robert of Lancaster, who was abbot 1409–33 (Williams 2001: 298).

If Guto ever was educated in an abbey, then he would have received a religious education. There is no evidence that monasteries were centres of bardic learning, however attractive the idea might be. Strata Marcella captured the imagination of Saunders Lewis because this was where Guto sang his elegy for Llywelyn ab y Moel in 1440, but since Llywelyn is described as *athro gwawd* ‘teacher of song’, 82.40) and not unambiguously as *[fy]athro gwawd* (‘my teacher of song’) Saunders Lewis did not go so far as to call him Guto’s bardic tutor, maintaining simply that he had a strong influence on the young poet. This is easy enough to believe, since both Llywelyn and Guto were soldier-poets, and such influence can indeed be discerned (Salisbury 2007b: 151–2). What is likely is that Guto travelled on bardic circuit with Llywelyn during the 1430s and, perhaps, the late 1420s. The only patron who can be connected closely with Llywelyn, namely Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan, also gave patronage to Guto. Rhys Goch Eryri’s *cywydd* to William, in which he requests a golden belt as a gift, prompted Llywelyn to sing a *cywydd* to the same patron. Both poems were probably sung in Raglan late in 1433 or early in 1434 (GRhGE 207; GSCyf 183). It would not be very surprising if Guto was present in William’s court when these poems were performed, and first travelled to Gwent as a result of his association with Llywelyn. Furthermore, Rhys Goch, who took part in bardic debates with Llywelyn on more than one occasion and sang an elegy for him, was famous for his singing to the family of Penrhyn in Gwynedd, another important court that Guto is known to have visited in his youth.

Little credence can be given to Williams's suggestion (1997: 201) concerning Guto's education, namely that he received bardic training as well as patronage from Dafydd Cyffin of Llangedwyn. This was suggested because Guto refers to him as *[y]r Athro Ddafydd* 'Master Dafydd' in a *cywydd* in praise of Sir Siôn Mechain, rector of Llandrinio (84.5). But Guto did not choose to refer to Dafydd (and to another of his patrons, Sir Benet, rector of Corwen) here because they had any role in his early education, but simply because Siôn would have been familiar with them as educated men in his part of the country. Furthermore, the title *Athro* is a reference to Dafydd's own learning rather than to any education Guto might have received from him, and it seems that his specialism was the Canon Law and Civil Law (from c.1444 onwards) rather than the learning of the poets.

The most likely conclusion is that the man who introduced Guto's Glyn to poetry was not a monk but rather a poet, or more correctly, perhaps, a minor poet who moved in circles that occasionally included more important ones such as Llywelyn ab y Moel and Rhys Goch Eryri. He could be compared to the tutor who trained Llywelyn himself (and, perhaps, Rhys Goch), namely Rhys ap Dafydd, a man about whom almost nothing is known and of whose verses only eight lines have been preserved (GSCyf 171; GRhGE poem Atodiad 2). In the absence of other evidence, all that can be suggested is that Guto's father, Siancyn y Glyn, may have had some involvement with his son's first steps in the poetic art. Saunders Lewis (1976: 81) conjured up a scene in which some educated man noticed Guto's 'exceptional promise' when he was very young and provided him with an education, but it is scarcely likely that an ordinary youth would have had the opportunity to display any promise unless his family already had some kind of connection with poetry.

His appearance

Saunders Lewis (1976: 81) painted a rather attractive picture of Guto as 'an exceptional boy ... [who] quickly grew to become a tall youth, well-built, swarthy, strong-featured, with an axe of a nose, black hair – he became bald before middle age – hands like a smith's – was his father a smith? – a champion at stone-throwing and horsemanship' (our translation). No doubt some of these details are the product of Saunders's lively imagination, but the general likeness is supported by the works of Guto and his contemporaries.

Both Syr Rhys and Llywelyn ap Gutun sang satirical poems to Guto, one in the 1460s and the other in the 1480s. In both cases the satire hinges upon the fact that Guto had been a strong man in his youth but now, in his old age, was much weaker (65a.29; 101a.31–6). This information is supported by Guto's own reference to the renown he won by throwing a heavy stone (33.43–4), a feat that Gutun Owain, likewise, mentions in his elegy for Guto (126.16). It is also worth noting that it was as an archer that Guto enlisted in the army of Richard, duke of York, in 1441. A number of references to archery in his poems suggest that he was very familiar with this skill (poem 11; 31.33–62), and no doubt his strength and, perhaps, his height would have been a great asset (cf. Hardy 1994: 179; for a fuller discussion of Guto as an archer and a soldier, see Day 2013).

The satirical portrayal of a frail and elderly Guto in the poems of Syr Rhys and Llywelyn must be modified somewhat, since both admit that he was, notwithstanding, still a man of considerable size. Both refer to him as a *cyff* 'log', and no doubt Guto's size contributed to the comic effect of Llywelyn's description of different parts of his body as the dwelling places of a host of sea creatures (65a.7–32; 101a.55). It is also necessary to modify some of Dafydd ab Edmwnd's descriptions of Guto in a satirical *cywydd* which claims that the poet suffered an injury as a result of lifting weights when he was young. Though it is unclear whether Guto really did rupture himself, it seems that his size made him an easy target for a poet who,

according to Guto's own satire, was much smaller in stature. Dafydd maintains that Guto was [b]oliog 'big-bellied' (68a.11), and there are references in other poems to his fondness for his food (cf. Salisbury 2011: 101–2). It is likely, however, that it is to the rupture that Dafydd is referring. Bearing in mind that Guto lived for a very long time and travelled widely throughout his life, he is unlikely to have been fat; rather, he may have had a naturally large frame. Indeed, Syr Rhys describes him as an *annair gul* 'lean heifer' during his alleged illness in Oswestry (101a.26).

Llywelyn ap Gutun refers to his fellow poet's [b]wyall drwyn 'axe-shaped nose' and wyneb arth 'bear's face' (65a.14, 20), and Guto himself supplies a memorable description of his large head and face in a *cywydd* in praise of Abbot Thomas of Shrewsbury: *Mae i mi wyneb padriarch / A chorun mwy no charn march* 'I have the face of a patriarch / and a crown larger than a horse's hoof' (77.59–60). His meaning, it seems, is that, when he sang to the abbot, he had a large face showing signs of age, and was losing his hair. In another poem, dating from the last decade of his life, he states that he has a *trawswch* 'moustache' and a [b]arf 'beard' (109.40, 55), though it seems clear that he lost the rest of his hair when he was quite young. Hywel Dafi calls him *moel brydydd* 'the bald poet' in a satirical poem which probably dates from the first half of the fifteenth century (18a.64). Guto's own counsel to his fellow burgesses in Oswestry is that his payment for his burgess-ship should be postponed *nes ym dyfu gwallt* 'until I've grown hair' (102.47–50) – that is, indefinitely! This poem may date from the 1460s. Some two decades later, in the 1480s, he described himself as an *eidion moel* 'bald bullock' in Wiliam ap Gruffudd's court at Cochwillan (55.31–2).

Guto did have hair at one time, though, and it is likely to have been black. Having praised the black hair of Henry Griffith, Guto appears to include himself amongst the other splendid things that are black in colour, along with Jesus's hair, velvet and ebony (33.1–10). In a *cywydd* addressed to another swarthy or black-haired patron, Guto maintains that this is *gorau lliw dyn* 'the best colour a man can have'. Furthermore, Dafydd ab Edmwnd satirizes him by referring to his *ceilliau duon* 'black testicles' (17.13; 68a.65).

One other fact that is worth mentioning is that Guto lost his sight at the end of his life. All but one of his references to his blindness date from his years at Valle Crucis (114.62; 116.45–8; 117.14, 49–50; 119.3), when he also had difficulty hearing (119.4), but a *cywydd* of thanks for a horse addressed to Dafydd ap Meurig Fychan and Elen daughter of Hywel of Nannau indicates that he continued to travel on the bardic circuit for a while, even when his sight was failing. Guto compares himself to another man who lost his sight but who refused to yield to his disability, namely Fulk Fitzwarine, and maintains that he has a real need for the horse in order that he might emulate his hero and, as before, defeat [m]il o'r glêr fân 'thousands of the petty poets' (51.41–52).

1. The early poems, c.1430–50

1.1 The earliest poems

Although Guto's exact year of birth is unknown, it is quite likely that he entered the world either during or soon after Owain Glyndŵr's revolt. The fiercest fighting ended in 1406 but the conflict continued until c.1417. By that year, Owain was in his grave and the lands of many rebels had been forfeited and transferred to new landowners. But there were a number of former rebels among those landowners, men who kept hold of their forfeited lands and re-established themselves, often in improved circumstances, in the new society. These *uchelwyr*, and their sons in particular, would sustain Guto's muse.

One former rebel who led the way in taking possession of forfeited lands was Gwilym ap Gruffudd of Penrhyn, the most powerful *uchelwr* in north Wales at the start of the century. Although no poem to Gwilym by Guto survives, he is the earliest patron for whom we have evidence that Guto praised him. In a *cywydd* addressed to Gwilym's son, Wiliam Fychan, Guto states quite clearly that he had received patronage from his father (56.19–20n):

Adeilais glod i Wilym,
Adail ei fab awdl fu ym.
I built a praise poem for Gwilym, / my ode was his son's construction.

Gwilym died early in 1431 (Carr 1990: 17). If Guto sang an elegy for him in that year (as did Rhys Goch Eryri and Gwilym ap Sefnyn, GRhGE poem 2; Bowen 2002: 74), it is noteworthy that there is a gap of some years between that and his earliest surviving poems. It is not impossible either that he sang in praise of Gwilym whilst the latter was still alive.

This early reference to now-lost praise was a stumbling block for Roberts (1977: 14) when it came to identifying Guto'r Glyn and Guto ap Siancyn as one and the same poet, since she maintained that Guto'r Glyn began his bardic career around 1455/60. But now that the two have been proven to be the same person it is, in reality, no great surprise that Guto should have been singing as early as c.1430. A very mature poetic craft is apparent already in his earliest surviving poems, showing that he must have honed his skills during his early travels on bardic circuit, about which little is now known. If Guto was raised in the Llangollen area it would have been natural enough for him to visit Gwynedd on his earliest circuits outside his native land, before venturing to the South some years later. Indeed, perhaps the connections by marriage between the family of Penrhyn and the Trefor family in the Dee valley proved helpful to his career. It may be concluded that the poetry he composed for patrons in north and south Wales c.1430–5 has been lost, perhaps because he had yet to gain recognition as a poet.

1.2 A soldier-poet in Normandy

The earliest surviving poems that can be dated with any certainty were sung in late 1437 or early 1438, and their subject is a Welsh *uchelwr* who had been in France since at least 1424. Indeed, it may be their peculiarity in this regard that ensured their survival. Both are *cywyddau* in praise of Sir Richard Gethin of Builth, a professional soldier who won renown fighting for the Crown in Normandy (poems 1 and 2). As a son of Rhys Gethin, a man who had fought on the side of Owain Glyndŵr at the start of the century, warfare was a way of life for Richard, and he is named as captain of Mantes from 1432 onwards. These were the final decades of what is now known as the Hundred Years' War between England and France, a long and costly struggle for the land and crown of France that ended in 1453, when the English were finally driven out of Normandy and Gascony. As discussed below, it is known for certain that Guto served Richard duke of York in 1441 as part of the duke's second military expedition in France. But it is likely that he also took part in the duke's first expedition, as a member of the army that landed at Honfleur on 7 June 1436 (Johnson 1988: 29). Unfortunately, the list of soldiers who mustered at Honfleur does not appear to have survived. The fact that Richard Gethin's name is absent from the records from the end of 1438 onwards strongly suggests that he died around the end of that year or soon afterwards. It is quite likely that Guto went to Normandy in 1436/7 and met his patron there. The duke travelled to Rouen, his headquarters in France, but no further details can be ascertained concerning Guto's own movements. It is possible that he travelled to Mantes, of which Richard was captain, but it is also possible that the duke had summoned Richard to Rouen and that it was there that the poet met his patron. The duke returned to England around 8 November 1437 (ibid. 30), but Guto may have come home considerably earlier, having completed his official period of service as a soldier, generally six

months. This would mean that he left France either in late 1436 or early 1437, and it is quite likely that he sang both poems in praise of Richard soon after returning to Wales (not in France, as claimed by Saunders Lewis 1976: 86–90).

At about the same time Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal sang a noteworthy *cywydd* on Guto's behalf to thank Richard for a golden cloak he had given to Guto, probably in exchange for his praise poetry (GHS poem 24). The strong suggestion is that Ieuan intended to convey Guto's appreciation from Wales to France and present it to Richard in person. Though there is no evidence that Ieuan served as a soldier in Normandy, the name of his father, Hywel Swrdwal, is recorded as a soldier in the service of Richard duke of York in Rouen in 1445 and 1447 (Soldier LME s.n. *Howell Sourdoual*, *Houel Sourdonel*). Assuming that the poem of thanks addressed to Richard is correctly attributed in the manuscripts to Ieuan (as opposed to his father Hywel), it is likely that Ieuan also travelled to France, or intended to do so at some point.

Guto returned to Normandy in late June 1441. His name is recorded as *Gitto Glyn* in a list of soldiers who mustered at Portsmouth in late May (Salisbury 2007a: 1; Johnson 1988: 35). He was an archer in the personal company of the duke of York. The duke was leader of a much more substantial army on his second expedition in Normandy, and it is likely that Guto's own experiences would have been rather different from what they had been in 1436. It is reasonable to suppose that he travelled with the duke straight to Pontoise in order to recapture the town from the possession of Charles VII. The army met with John Talbot and his own army in Juziers on 13/14 July and they captured Pontoise without opposition some days later (Pollard 1983: 55–6). Having reinforced the town, they went in pursuit of Charles, crossing the river Oise in Beaumont before Charles retreated to Poissy, south of the river Seine. On 24 July the armies of the duke and Talbot were on Charles's trail once more, re-crossing the Oise in Heuville. But the duke's army came into conflict with French forces, suffering heavy losses, and it is likely that the duke led his army to Rouen soon after and that Talbot led his own forces on to Poissy in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Charles. The duke reached Rouen on 1 August, 'his troops haggard, starving and exhausted' (ibid. 57). Over a month later, Charles recaptured the town of Pontoise. If Guto took part in these events, he could take pride only in his contribution to keeping in check the French gains in Normandy. It is likely that he spent a period of six months in France before returning to Wales either in late 1441 or early 1442.

Two other poems bear witness to Guto's campaigns in France. The first is his *cywydd* in praise of Matthew Gough, another Welsh soldier who fought overseas from 1423 until 1450, a few years short of the end of the war (poem 3). As in the case of the poems that Guto sang to Richard Gethin, the likelihood is that the poem to Matthew was performed in Wales, and it is unclear whether Guto ever actually met his patron. It is not known where Matthew Gough was in 1436/7 during Guto's probable first visit to Normandy, though it might be expected that he would have been a fairly regular visitor to Rouen, the capital of the region. Between 1439 and 1442 he was captain of Bayeux, a city to the west of Caen and some distance away from the region between Pontoise and Rouen where Guto was stationed in 1441. But he took part in the task of besieging and capturing Harfleur in October 1440, and it is not impossible that he was still in the town when the duke's army landed there, perhaps, in June 1441. But even if Guto never saw the famous soldier, he would certainly have heard enough about him from Richard Gethin, who fought with him against Joan of Arc at Beaugency in 1429.

The second poem relating to France is one of Guto's most remarkable *cywyddau*, namely his praise of Thomas ap Watkin of Llanddewi Rhydderch in Gwent (poem 4). Here Guto foreshadows a military campaign in France by staging a mock battle between Thomas, his poets and his reciters on the one hand and some French wines, representing the famous French

leaders, on the other. It is a lively evocation of the excitement and enthusiasm of a group of men preparing to go to war. Guto may have sung it before he travelled to France in 1436. However, since there is no certainty that Thomas took part in that campaign, it is much safer to assume that the poem dates from the spring or early summer of 1441, because the name *Thomas Watkyns* appears as an archer (along with his brother, *Johan Watkyns*, as a mounted man-at-arms) in the list of soldiers who sailed from Portsmouth in June that year (Salisbury 2007a: 44n115; Soldier LME s.n.).

The names of two of Guto's other patrons appear in that list of soldiers in the duke of York's army in 1441. The most noteworthy is Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan (Salisbury 2007a: 39n52; Soldier LME s.n. *William ap Thomas*), an *uchelwr* of considerable authority who rose swiftly in the duke's service during the 1430s and was a member of his council in 1441. Guto sang a notable *cywydd* of praise to William in which he calls him *iustus doeth* 'wise judge' (19.18), a reference to the office of deputy justiciar of the southern principality which he held from 1439 until his death in 1445. As mentioned above, it is possible that Guto had visited Raglan as early as 1433 in the company of Llywelyn ab y Moel and Rhys Goch Eryri, and it is not surprising to see him receiving patronage from William some years later. It is possible, too, that Guto was the author of an elegy sung for William in 1445, of which only a fragment survives in the manuscripts (poem 125). Furthermore, with the exception of Richard Gethin's home in Builth and Matthew Goch's in Maelor, Guto could scarcely have chosen a better place than Raglan in which to perform the poems that he sang to these two soldiers in their absence. The list of soldiers also contains the name of *Henry Griffith Eskuier*, an *uchelwr* from the parish of Bacton, Herefordshire, whom the Welsh called Harri Gruffudd (Salisbury 2007a: 39n51; Soldier LME s.n.). No doubt Guto and Henry were fairly close contemporaries, and the very fact that Guto became a soldier had much to do with Henry's great familiarity with military matters. Henry was a member of the garrison of Carentan in northern Normandy in 1431 under the authority of Sir Nicholas Burdet of Warwickshire (Chapman 2013: 108). Though Guto's poems to Richard Gethin are the earliest than can be dated with any certainty, there are others that might well have been sung before 1436. One of these is a *cywydd* in praise of Henry (poem 32). The poem was recorded in Peniarth 57 sometime before c.1440 (RepWM; Salisbury 2007a: 11–12), though only a fragment has survived. It is a great pity that the rest has been lost, for its contents could very easily have cast more light upon this exciting period in Guto's early life. As it is, we must rely on what Guto says in his elegy for Henry (36.23–5):

Dug fi at y dug of Iorc
 Dan amod cael deunawmorc.
 Fy ngwaith fu eilwaith foliant,
 Fwrw gwawd hwn i frig tant.

*He took me to the duke of York / with the agreement that I should get eighteen marks.
 / My task was praise in return, / to direct a song of praise for this man to the top of the
 harp-string.*

As can be seen, it was at Henry's urging, in all likelihood, that Guto entered the duke's service as a soldier, sometime between c.1433, when Henry returned to Wales from Carentan (Chapman 2013: 109), and 1436. There is an unusual sense of closeness in Guto's poems to Henry which reflects a friendship beyond the usual relationship between poet and patron. Guto sang a notable *cywydd* in praise of Henry's black hair – possibly because Guto's own hair was dark – in which he refers to the great prowess they both had in throwing a heavy stone (poem 33). Henry, of course, is supreme, as he is, too, in another interesting *cywydd* that Guto sang

promoting Henry's cause in his competition with the poet Ieuan Gethin for the love of Gwladus of Glyn-nedd (poem 34). It appears that Gwladus, who may have been a daughter of one of Guto's patrons, Rhys ap Siancyn of Glyn-nedd, was a bardic pupil of Ieuan's, but Guto's advice to her is not to have anything to do with that old man, but rather to go to the court of young Henry, where she will be well satisfied. Gwladus is mentioned again in another *cywydd* that Guto sang to Henry, this time in order to chastise his patron for refusing to pay his poets (poem 35). Henry provides wine in plenty but it is hard to get money out of him, an accusation that would surely have vexed him and which reflects the nature of his relationship with Guto. Guto is scarcely likely to have felt comfortable enough in the company of other patrons to be able to voice a similar complaint about miserliness. It is clear that Guto knew Henry well enough to feel that he could say whatever he liked in his poems to him, which were in all likelihood sung during the 1440s and 1450s.

One other poem must be mentioned in connection with Guto's military career, namely his *cywydd* in praise of John Talbot, second earl of Shrewsbury (poem 78). Assuming that Guto had seen his patron's father, the soldier John Talbot who was made first earl of Shrewsbury in 1442, on campaign with the duke of York in Pontoise and the surrounding area in 1441, it is tempting to suggest that he came into contact with the second earl through his military connections. The internal evidence of the poem suggests that it was sung between c.1437 and early 1445. It is perhaps no coincidence that Guto would, in years to come, also sing in praise of the duke of York's son (poem 29).

1.3 A bardic circuit in the South?

As well as what remains of a *cywydd* in praise of Henry Griffith, Peniarth 57 contains a handful of other poems by Guto, all sung before c.1440. One other poem can be connected with Henry, namely a *cywydd* in praise of his uncle, Phylib ap Gwilym Llwyd of Tregunter in the Wye valley (poem 30). Phylib may have been a tenant of Henry's but Guto does not refer to the relationship between uncle and nephew, instead mentioning another of his patrons – indeed, his main patron in his youth – Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd of Strata Florida. It appears that Guto had sworn an oath to Phylib that he would visit him instead of the abbot, but broke his word because the patronage he received in the abbey was so generous. Subsequently the abbot gave Guto leave to visit Phylib. The restrictions placed by the abbot upon his poet's movements should probably not be interpreted too literally, but the strong suggestion is that Guto was engaged in a bardic circuit that encompassed parts of Ceredigion, the south-east and the Valleys. It is likely that this circuit included Newcourt, Henry's home in Herefordshire, and the homes of at least two other patrons who are the subject of poems in Peniarth 57, namely Sir William, priest of Merthyr Tydfil, and Rhys ap Siancyn of Glyn-nedd. Both poems are noteworthy: the one, the earliest poem that can be connected with Merthyr, for its masterly portrayal of a priest's love for the (female) patron saint of his parish (poem 16); and the other for the glimpse it provides of a patron reading and discussing literary gems with his poet (poem 15).

It is not impossible that Raglan and, perhaps, Thomas ap Watkin's home in Llanddewi Rhydderch were part of the same bardic circuit, along with Siancyn Havard's home in Brecon. In his *cywydd* in praise of Siancyn (poem 31), Guto compares his patron to a bow of good yew wood which aims golden arrows at his poets, a strong echo of the fact that it was as an archer that Guto was recruited into the duke of York's army. But since this poem was not preserved in Peniarth 57, as far as is known, it is perhaps safer to suppose that Guto sang it during a later visit to Brecon, perhaps in the 1440s and around the same time that he sang his biting semi-satirical *cywydd* to Henry Griffith (poem 35), discussed above. The same general complaint is

voiced in the *cywydd* to Siancyn, where *uchelwyr* who are reluctant to provide patronage are compared to fragile, broken bows and reviled for turning their backs on their Welsh roots (31.29–32):

Yr hwn a fu'n rhoi ennyd,
Efô fydd gybydd i gyd,
Ac eraill gynt a gerais
A brŷn swydd a breiniau Sais.

*He who used to be open-handed for a while, / now he's an undiluted miser, / and others
whom once I used to love, / now purchase the position and rights of an Englishman.*

The two poems are an important record of the difficulties the poets had to face on occasion, and their attitude is reflected in brief references in other poems by Guto throughout his career. The impression created by the majority of the poems that have come down to us is that the nation abounded in red-blooded patrons who kept their doors forever open to every wandering poet who happened to drop by. Some of Guto's poems indicate that the reality of the situation could be somewhat different from the poetic ideal, with some patrons being obliged to put the interests of their careers before their good name as patrons. They also testify to Guto's own readiness to express his discontent where necessary.

Another poem that demonstrates Guto's awareness of the archer's skill is his *cywydd* in praise of Rhys ap Dafydd of Uwch Aeron in Ceredigion (poem 11). As in his *cywydd* for Siancyn Havard, the archery is metaphorical, but here the patron is the target of the poet, whose praise is the arrows. This extended metaphor is maintained from the first line to the last. The poem is preserved in Peniarth 57, along with a *cywydd* in praise of another patron from the vicinity of the river Aeron, Hywel ap Llywelyn Fychan of Glyn Aeron (poem 10). This time the metaphor turns on Hywel's grip upon the poets' praise, envisaged as a divine ball that came into his possession after having been passed down the generations since the time of the 'Three Generous Ones'. The fact that the two poems are preserved in Peniarth 57 proves that they were sung before c.1440 (and indeed, Rhys died in 1439/40), and it is also possible that they were part of the same bardic circuit as some of the above-mentioned poems sung in the south-east. Considering them all together, they could be the fruit of a bardic journey that traversed the uplands from Strata Florida to the valleys of the Black Mountains in the Marches, before turning towards Merthyr Tydfil and then the upper Neath valley. From there the journey back to the abbey would have led the poet through Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, and it would be no surprise if the hearths of Rhys and Hywel enticed him to within sight of the sea. If such was the case, then it is interesting to note that the journey from the Valleys to the Aeron may have passed by Llanybydder and the home of another *uchelwr* who provided Guto with patronage, namely Dafydd ap Tomas of Blaen-tren. However, as in the case of the poem in praise of Siancyn Havard and the semi-satirical poem addressed to Henry Griffith, the fact that the poems Guto sang to Dafydd are absent from Peniarth 57 suggests that they date from a later period. Indeed, in his masterly ode in praise of Dafydd, Guto refers to his *taith faith* 'long journey' to his patron's court *o Fôn i oror Aeron / ... drwy Fabwynion* 'from Anglesey to the banks of the river Aeron / ... through Mebwynion' (12.47–8), and he came *trwy Deifi* 'through the river Teifi' in order to sing a *cywydd* of praise to him (13.4). Furthermore, Guto says that he spent *pedair blynedd* 'four years' (15) in the March before returning to Blaen-tren, a strong suggestion that this bardic circuit in Carmarthenshire dated to after c.1440, perhaps during the 1440s or 1450s. Dafydd is praised for his talent as a love poet, amongst other things (12.37–

42), an early reference in Guto's works to a patron who practised the craft of poetry as well as patronizing it.

1.4 Glamorgan and Gwent

Guto received patronage from at least two other patrons in the south-east during the 1440s or 1450s, but there is no reason to believe that their courts were part of the bardic circuit outlined above. The earliest patron to whom Guto is known to have sung in this region is David Mathew, a man from Llandaf and the subject of a *cywydd* which also praises his four sons and his wife, Gwenllïan, who was a cousin of Sir William ap Thomas. David's effigy may be seen to this day in Llandaf cathedral.

The second is Morgan ap Roger of Gwynllŵg near Newport, the patron of two remarkable *cywyddau* by Guto and Hywel Dafi. Hywel composed the first of them, in which he accuses Guto (perhaps with tongue in cheek) of flattering his patrons in his praise poems (poem 18a). Hywel himself does not want to be guilty of this fault and tries to praise Morgan without yielding to the temptation to exaggerate. Guto's honest answer is that he does, indeed, sometimes use flattery in his verses, but that this is not incompatible with the nature of the poets' craft (poem 18). His praise is full of exaggeration because that is the kind of poem that his patron and his audience want to hear. Moreover, that kind of praise is much more attractive than what Hywel offers, and Guto proves this by praising Morgan in his own inimitable style. The two poems form an interesting and sophisticated discussion of the poets' main activity of eulogy, and they were to be followed by at least one further light-hearted debate between the two poets in Raglan castle in years to come.

Another patron whom Guto may well have praised in this period is Trahaearn ab Ieuan of Penrhos. As is discussed below, Guto composed a request poem for Trahaearn during the 1480s in which he seems to be on quite familiar terms with his patron. Other earlier poems for Trahaearn may have been lost.

1.5 Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd

However many homes Guto visited during his early bardic circuits in the South, it is certain that he returned time after time to Strata Florida abbey. Peniarth 57 preserves three *cywyddau* to the man who 'prevented' him from travelling to the court of Phylib ap Gwilym Llwyd in Tregunter, Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd. Rhys deserves special attention because, as far as is known, he was Guto's main patron in his youth. It was probably Rhys who commissioned the production of Peniarth 57 in Strata Florida, and it is not impossible that he was one of the manuscript's two main scribes (Salisbury 2007a: 18–19). If this small manuscript had never been commissioned, or if it had been lost, then our knowledge of Guto's early career would be much the poorer. Guto sang two other poems to Rhys that do not occur in Peniarth 57, namely an ode of praise and an elegy. In the case of most patrons, only one, or at most two, poems addressed to them have survived, and, though rich enough in some respects, the poems often convey only one aspect of the relationship between poet and patron. The three *cywyddau* to Rhys in Peniarth 57 provide a fuller picture of that relationship, since they contain not merely unmixed praise but also concern and uncertainty over the abbot's troubles and his frequent absences from the abbey.

According to one *cywydd* Rhys was suffering from some sickness or physical injury that compelled him to leave Strata Florida (unless he was already away from home when he was taken ill), and Guto maintains that he will overcome this affliction just as he overcame the enemies who sought to oust him from his abbacy (poem 5; Salisbury 2009: 65–9). In another *cywydd*, Guto expresses his discontent that Rhys has left the abbey to visit Oxford, perhaps on

the occasion of the establishment of the Cistercian college of St Bernard there in 1437/8 (poem 6; Salisbury 2009: 69–74). It is likely that these two poems were sung during a visit to the abbey between Guto's first sojourn as a soldier in France in 1436 and his second in 1441. There is less certainty in the case of the third *cywydd* to Rhys, which portrays a conversation concerning the abbot between the poet and his tongue (poem 7; Salisbury 2007b: 149–55; 2009: 74–7). At just 44 lines, this is a short *cywydd* in comparison with every other poem from the period before c.1450, and clearly shows the influence of Llywelyn ab y Moel, who also composed a *cywydd* based on the idea of holding a conversation with his tongue (Salisbury 2007b: 151–2; GSCyf poem 12). This, along with the poem's simple structure, strongly suggests that it is the earliest of Guto's surviving works. Bearing in mind that he was active as a poet as early as c.1431, it is not impossible that the poem was sung between 1429/30, when Rhys was appointed abbot of Strata Florida, and 1436.

Guto's poems to Rhys, and his ode in particular (poem 8) bear witness to the abbot's cultural and architectural activity in Strata Florida. Rhys tried his best to restore the abbey to good condition and prosperity after a period of extensive destruction during Owain Glyndŵr's revolt, but his ambition proved greater than his means, and as a result of his debts he was imprisoned in Carmarthen in 1439/40. He died in prison around the end of 1440 or the beginning of 1441, and Guto sang a magnificent elegy for him (poem 9). This poem is amongst Guto's longest *cywyddau* and is an emotive tribute to a patron who was, perhaps, of very much the same age as him. But there is also a suggestion in the poem that Guto's attention in the summer months of 1441 was wandering and that he had already committed himself to serve the duke of York, hundreds of miles away from the troubled abbey in Ceredigion (9.13–20).

1.6 *On circuit in the North*

All the poems discussed so far were sung to *uchelwyr* in south Wales. The only possible exception is the poem to Matthew Gough of Maelor, but there is no telling where exactly this poem was performed considering that its subject was campaigning in France at the time. It is known that Guto sang in Penrhyn, near Bangor, c.1431, but there is a gap of almost a decade before we have a surviving poem from north Wales that can be dated with certainty. In February 1440, about a year before he sang his impressive elegy for Abbot Rhys in Strata Florida, Guto sang an elegy for Llywelyn ab y Moel in Strata Marcella (poem 82). As already noted above, it is very likely that Llywelyn had some considerable involvement in Guto's early career as a professional poet, though he does not appear to have been his bardic tutor. Rhys Goch Eryri also sang an elegy for Llywelyn, which is the latest of his poems that can be dated with any certainty (GRhGE poem 10). The performance of these two poems was a turning point in the development of the style of the *cywydd*: one, by the ageing Rhys, is rich in *sangiadau* (phrases inserted into a line without a syntactical link to the main sentence), whilst the other, by the young Guto, moves regularly from one neat couplet to the next.

There are only two other poems from Guto's early career for which a fairly certain estimate of their date can be given. The first is a praise *cywydd* for the four sons of Edward ap Dafydd of Bryncunallt in the lordship of Chirk, a relative of Owain Glyndŵr who fought on his side in the revolt (poem 103). Though the sons' qualities are the poem's main subject matter, several lines praise Edward and it is clear that he was alive when it was performed. Edward died on 25 April 1445, and Guto sang an elegy for him (poem 104). Though no more precise date can be offered for the praise poem to Edward's sons, bearing in mind the fact that Guto was in Strata Marcella abbey at the time of Llywelyn ab y Moel's death in 1440, it is not impossible that it dates from the same period. These poems are the earliest ones that can be connected with the north-east.

The next poem for which a definite date can be suggested belongs to a slightly later period in Guto's career, namely his elegy for Robert Trefor (discussed below), but it is likely that there are some other surviving poems that date from early on. One poem was sung in Shrewsbury, a clear indication of the wide geographical range of bardic circuits in Guto's day (poem 77). Its patron was Abbot Thomas of the town's Benedictine abbey, and Guto playfully asserts that he himself wishes to become a cleric so that he might spend all his time in the abbot's company. Guto sang three rather remarkable praise *cywyddau* to Hywel ab Ieuan Fychan of Moeliwrch near Llansilin, a man whose name is mentioned in records between 1408/9 and 1416/17. His father, Ieuan Fychan ab Ieuan Gethin, was present in Glyndyfrdwy in September 1400 when Owain Glyndŵr was proclaimed Prince of Wales. Owain's famous court at Sycharth stood not far away from Ieuan's home in Moeliwrch, and both were burned to ashes by English forces in May 1403 (Huws 2007: 106–7). Guto sang one of his poems to Hywel to celebrate the rebuilding of Moeliwrch (poem 90). This was an event of some importance that also drew other poets to the lime-washed house on the high slope above Llansilin, men such as Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf and, perhaps, Syr Rhys. Indeed, it is possible that Moeliwrch was the scene of the exchange of *englynion* between Ieuan and Guto, in which the former says he does not wish to share his bed with the latter because he is *un o'r glêr* 'one of the minstrels' (poem 93). Guto replies by reminding Ieuan that his own lineage is not entirely unmixed. As in the case of the other two *cywyddau* that Guto sang to Hywel, no precise date can be offered for the poem in praise of Moeliwrch, but Hywel's known dates, along with the poem's metrical craft, suggest an early date, perhaps c.1440. In another *cywydd* addressed to Hywel, Guto refers to an *abad draw* 'abbot yonder' with whom he had made *amodau* 'provisos' that he would not leave him (91.59–62). There is nothing in the poem to suggest which abbot is meant, but the lines do call to mind Guto's mention, in his praise poem to Phylip ap Gwilym Llwyd of Tregunter, that he had sworn an oath to Abbot Rhys of Strata Florida that he would not visit other patrons. If it is indeed Rhys that he had in mind, then Guto's poems to Hywel may be counted amongst his earliest.

The *cywydd* to Hywel that contains the reference to the abbot is amongst Guto's most remarkable works (poem 91). About halfway through he states that other poets are disgruntled because he sings so little to other patrons, an accusation that stems, it is asserted, from jealousy of the close relationship between him and Hywel. Guto's response is to portray that relationship as a marriage, though not an earthly marriage between *gwas a gwen* 'a young man and woman'. Rather, this is a divine union ordained by God. The *cywydd* provides a refined and unique portrayal of the interdependent relationship between poet and patron, as, too, does another poem that Guto sang to Hywel when the patron injured his knee (poem 92). Guto makes full use of a topos common in sympathy poems, according to which the poet himself is portrayed as suffering grievously when his patron is ill. But Guto is no ordinary poet, and he offers to heal Hywel through the power of his poetry, just as the legendary Taliesin succeeded in freeing his own patron, Elffin, from prison by means of his poetic gift. Guto then calls upon the aid of a multitude of saints in order to heal the injury and ensure that Hywel will be fit and able to provide patronage once more.

Mali daughter of Iolyn, one of Hywel's cousins, was the wife of one of Guto's patrons in the commote of Deuddwr, namely Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd Deuddwr of Collfryn. The sole surviving copy of a praise poem addressed to Gruffudd is ascribed to Guto. This ferocious *cywydd* commemorating the patron's feats in fighting against an Englishman who had come to ravage his land (poem 83) most probably refers to some now-forgotten conflict during or directly following Owain Glyndŵr's revolt. The style of the poem, with its use of *sangiadau*, is quite different from most of the other poems that Guto sang in his youth, but it may be

significant that the poet himself does not remember the incident, and had therefore, perhaps, been born after the fighting took place (83.49–58). If Guto was indeed the author, he may well be reminding Gruffudd and his audience of his patron's courage years before, and the poem could be one of his very earliest works.

The only other poem to have survived from the period of Guto's youth is from the north-west, namely a *cywydd* to request an Irish mantle from Elen daughter of Robert Puleston of Llannerch, Llŷn (poem 53). Indeed, this is the only poem from the north-west that can be connected with Guto's early career. In this case the early date rests on its metrical craft and the fact that Elen was a niece of Owain Glyndŵr. It is the earliest of Guto's request poems, a genre he would employ extensively in his later career. This early request for an Irish mantle demonstrates Guto's inventive ability to describe a gift imaginatively, as well as his fondness for demonstrating that he was a poet who had an eye for the latest fashions.

2. The period of the Wars of the Roses, c.1450–70

The surviving poetry strongly suggests that Guto spent most of this period in two regions of the Marches. His northern activity can be seen to be centred around the town of Oswestry, where he lived for a time as a burgess, while in the south the castle of Raglan, the seat of the Herberts in Gwent, played a similar role. Yet that is not the whole story, and Guto seems to have been quite active in other areas, especially Gwynedd.

2.1 On circuit in the north-east

Only one of Guto's poems can be dated with certainty to the 1450s (poem 105). It is an elegy for one of the duke of York's officers in the lordship of Denbigh, Robert Trefor of Bryncunallt, eldest son of the Edward ap Dafydd who had previously been a patron of the poet. This splendid elegy for Robert, composed in 1452, refers to his four sons as four towers resembling the famous towers of Caernarfon castle. One of those sons was Siôn Trefor, known to have later been a patron of Guto's, though none of the poems composed for him has survived.

Other poems with a Marcher location may belong to the 1450s, such as the two *cywyddau* performed at the home of Sir John Burgh and his wife Joan at Wattlesborough in Shropshire. These can only be dated sometime in the years 1439–71. They raise an interesting issue, in that it is very uncertain that either of the recipients understood Welsh; they were, after all, English, as far as we can tell. Did Guto himself communicate with them in English? It is hard not to think so. But if so, why would the couple patronize verse they could not understand? The answer may be that the example set by the landowning class in Wales proper exercised an influence over the mixed society of the Marches. The poems Guto composed for this couple are a praise poem for Sir John (poem 80) and another for his wife (poem 81). In the latter he warmly thanks Joan and her daughter Isbel for looking after him as he lay sick in their house. Another problematic poem, composed sometime during the period 1448–1476/7, is the *cywydd* asking for reconciliation with Ieuan Fychan ab Ieuan of Pengwern near Llangollen (poem 106). The bone of contention between poet and patron is not known, but the light-hearted tone makes it difficult to see any association with the imprisonment of Ieuan Fychan's sons in 1457, an association suggested in some manuscripts and upheld by some modern scholars.

Moving now to the north-eastern March, and Maelor Gymraeg in particular, we find Guto composing an elegy for Siôn ap Madog Puleston of Hafod-y-wern near Wrexham, sometime after 1461 (poem 72). Since this area was apparently on Guto's itinerary mid-century, it may well be possible to assign one of the most striking of his request poems to this period. This is a *cywydd* asking for a sallet from Wiliam Rodn of Holt on behalf of Dafydd Bromffild of Bersham (poem 73). The poem describes a full suit of armour, but it is bereft of the steel helmet needed for completeness. Then the sallet is metaphorically conjured up, being compared with

a lamp, the housing of a bishop (i.e. a mitre), a loaf made of steel and, in the final lines, a bright sun that will rise in the east and set in the west – the direction of travel from Holt to Bersham. Was it also in this same period that Guto went to Chester? His intent was to appeal to the famous Rood there in the church of St John the Baptist to cure an injury that one of his patrons had suffered. Certainly his *cywydd* for Dafydd ab Ieuan, whose leg had been hurt by an arrow, contains a promise to make such a pilgrimage (poem 92), but unfortunately nothing more is known of the patron.

Guto's striking poems for Hywel ab Ieuan Fychan of Moeliwrch, which belong to an early stage in his career, have already been mentioned. The poet continued to work for other members of Hywel's extended family in the eastern valleys of the Berwyns during the 1450s and 1460s. Hywel's cousin, Dafydd Cyffin ab Iolyn, settled near Llangedwyn in the Tanad valley, where Guto praised him sometime between 1444 and 1462 (poem 94). Following the Tanad downstream we reach the home of another of Guto's patrons in these years, namely Abertanad, which stood on the border between the lordships of Powys and Oswestry. The householder was a brother of Hywel of Moeliwrch, Gruffudd ab Ieuan Fychan. It was a sad event that provoked the first surviving *cywydd* for the Abertanad family: the death of Gruffudd's wife, Gweurful daughter of Madog, was the occasion for poem 88. It evokes melancholy images of the empty house and the quiet grave in Llanyblodwel church. In this border region a monoglot Welshman might be made a figure of fun by some of his neighbours, as appears to have happened to the son of Gruffudd and Gweurful, Dafydd Llwyd ap Gruffudd. A praise poem sung by Guto to Dafydd (poem 86) contains a stirring defence of Dafydd's loyalty to his mother tongue, as well as praise for more commonly noticed virtues such as his strength and his generous treatment of guests. It, together with the elegy for Dafydd's mother, suggests that Guto was a fairly frequent visitor to Abertanad over an extended period. On another occasion Guto thanked Dafydd's wife, Catrin daughter of Maredudd, for giving him a new purse (poem 87). Dafydd and Catrin both died in 1465. Guto's elegy in honour of Dafydd (poem 89) is a powerfully emotional one. It refers to the *bubo* (Welsh *cornwyd*) that appeared on his body three days before he died, revealing that he was suffering from the plague. His wife Catrin was already dead by then, in all likelihood from the same disease.

2.2 Oswestry

Dafydd Llwyd of Abertanad was a relative of Sieffrai Cyffin of Oswestry, one of Guto's most important north-eastern patrons. Although it is difficult to date any of the poems to Sieffrai with confidence, it is certain that Guto was already singing for him before the death of Dafydd Llwyd in 1465. He composed a *cywydd* requesting a brigandine from Sieffrai on Dafydd's behalf (poem 98), in which he says that Sieffrai held office in Oswestry. He calls it [*c*]apteniaeth or 'captaincy'. Sieffrai is known to have been one of the bailiffs of the town in 1463. If that is the office referred to, then the poem may date to the early 1460s, but a date in the previous decade is also possible. That is true also of the *cywydd* of praise which names Sieffrai's wife, Siân (poem 97). If we accept the testimony of the sixteenth-century antiquarian Gruffudd Hiraethog, then Sieffrai married his second wife, Ann, in 1467, and that gives a *terminus ante quem* for poem 97. On the other hand, it is likely that two other poems composed for Sieffrai, a praise poem (poem 96) and a *cywydd* requesting two greyhounds from Robert ab Ieuan Fychan of Coetmor (poem 100), are later in date. It is very likely too that a *cywydd* asking for a hunting horn on behalf of Siôn Eutun (poem 99) was composed c.1475, while Sieffrai was seneschal of the lordship of Chirk. A notable feature of Guto's praise for Sieffrai is the attention he pays to Sieffrai's travels, especially in the poem addressed to him and his wife together (poem 97), where Guto notes that he went on pilgrimage to Rome and even further

afield, to the Holy Land. Guto suggests that Sieffrai's father Morus had been a noted traveller too – he went to Prussia and to Arras.

The poems for Sieffrai Cyffin are closely connected with one of Guto's most remarkable works, his *cywydd* of praise for the town of Oswestry (poem 102). It contains generous compliments for the town, of which Guto tells us that he was a burgess. A document of sixteenth-century date confirms that Guto did indeed win this status through praising the town in verse. The poet tells us that he had once, in his youth, been a *[b]laeneuwr* – that is, someone who lived in the uplands – but now, an old man, he chooses the comforts of town life. The poem may belong to the 1460s, and Sieffrai's holding of the constableness in Oswestry may have had some influence on the decision to award Guto the status of a burgess in exchange for poetry. However, it is not clear when precisely Guto settled in the town, nor whether he had lived there for some time before becoming a burgess. Though Guto does not name any of his fellow burgesses in the *cywydd* to Oswestry, it is very likely that both Sieffrai and his nephew, Maredudd ap Hywel, were among them. A powerful praise poem for Maredudd probably belongs to this period (poem 95). This is more certainly true in the case of the debate poems that Guto exchanged with the priest-poet Syr Rhys, for Guto mentions him in a *cywydd* of praise for Sieffrai (97.25–8). According to Syr Rhys, illness had prevented Guto from travelling to Valle Crucis abbey, and Syr Rhys goes on to mock the wretched food that Guto had to eat at home in comparison with the splendid feast that was waiting for him at the abbey (poem 101a). Guto responds by accusing Syr Rhys of accepting an invitation to a meal with him at his home, and then behaving crudely and ungraciously while drunk (poem 101). Though the poem does not say that the house in question was in Oswestry, the bread on Guto's table is called *bwrdeisiaidd* 'burgess-like', which is very suggestive. These debate poems also contain the only information about Guto as a married man. His wife was called Dwgws, a pet-form of *Dyddgu*. We do not know how long they were married. Syr Rhys's comment that Guto had become enfeebled in old age compared with the strong man he had once been, and that this was disagreeable to Dwgws, suggests that they had been together since Guto's youth, but there is no unambiguous statement of this. The abbot of Valle Crucis at the time was Siôn ap Rhisiart, who was in office from c.1455 until 1480; alas, no verse in his honour has survived under Guto's name. Nevertheless, it is clear that the poet was a frequent visitor there during the 1460s.

2.3 On circuit in mid- and west Wales

Around mid-century, it appears that Guto spent most of his time in the east of Wales and the Marches. In fact, only one poem for a patron outside those areas can definitely be attributed to this time. Barely a month after the coronation of Edward IV in July 1461 there was an altercation at court between an unnamed Englishman and Siôn Dafî, a Welshman from Melverley in Shropshire who had settled in London. Siôn was punished by the public severing of his hand in the market at Cheapside, one Friday in August of that year. A vituperative poem by Guto commemorates the occasion (poem 41). It was apparently performed in Cemais, near Machynlleth, and in Siôn's absence, since the latter was in London. What connection Siôn Dafî had with Cemais is unknown, but a poet local to that area, Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn, composed a satire on him sometime during the reign of Edward IV, accusing Siôn Dafî of having blackened his name before the king. We can be sure that Siôn was a familiar figure in the area.

Nevertheless, there are numerous poems for patrons in mid- and north-west Wales which, though they cannot be accurately dated, should in all probability be assigned to the years 1450–70. For instance, there is a *cywydd* of praise for Dafydd Llwyd ap Dafydd of Newtown, composed before the patron's death, sometime between 1465 and 1469 (poem 37). In it the

poet laments, not entirely seriously, that he cannot find any fresh material about Dafydd, since so many other poets have sung his praises, among them Gwilym ab Ieuan Du, Llawdden and one of the Srawdals. Not far north of Newtown was the home of another patron, Maredudd ab Ifan Fychan of Cedewain. Guto composed a poem asking him for a horse on behalf of a Welshpool relative of Maredudd's, Rheinallt ap Rhys Gruffudd (poem 39). If we follow the Severn eastwards we reach Vaynor (Y Faenor), the home of Edward ap Hywel and Gwenllïan daughter of Rhys, a short distance south-west of the village of Berriew. It is possible that Vaynor was damaged during the Glyndŵr rebellion; at any rate, a new building was erected by Edward and Gwenllïan on the 'hill above Berriew', and was celebrated by Guto in poem 38. The house is compared to Owain Glyndŵr's former residence at Sycharth, 'once raised upon the slopes of a mound'. It is a good example of the rebuilding that was so prevalent in fifteenth-century Wales.

A note in the hand of Thomas Evans (written between 1604 and 1624) informs us of the location where Guto and other poets composed a series of *englynion* satirizing Tudur Penllyn. The occasion was the marriage feast of one Dafydd ap Maredudd Fychan, the place apparently south of Newtown and near Llananno. This is the earliest certain example of the custom known as *cyff clêr*, in which a senior poet would be made a figure of fun by others, drawing on a semi-fictional storyline. The victim would then be allowed to respond. The conceit on this occasion was that a wolf had stolen Tudur's testicles; his own son, Ieuan, was among the mockers. Indeed, out of the poems attacking Tudur only those of Ieuan and Guto have survived (poems 46a and 46b), though in his response Tudur names eight others who took part, including Gutun Owain (poem 46b). The date is not known for certain, but all the poets involved flourished between the 1450s and 1470s.

It is probable that Guto visited Nannau, a well-known centre for patronage near Dolgellau, sometime during the 1460s to praise Meurig Fychan ap Hywel Selau, his wife, Angharad daughter of Dafydd, their son, Dafydd, and Dafydd's wife, Elen daughter of Hywel (poem 49). Guto devotes a section to each individual in turn, the praise being fairly unexceptional until he reaches Elen (49.37–48). Elen, a granddaughter of Gweurful daughter of Madog, had once looked after the poet, and others, while they were sick. This happened in Bala, not far from her family home in Rug near Corwen. Guto promises to visit Nannau again if he reaches old age, a promise which he appears to have kept. There is a strong reminiscence here of a poem of praise by the fourteenth-century poet Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, in which Llywelyn promises to live with his patrons at Nannau in his old age. The patrons in question were Meurig Llwyd, the grandfather of Guto's patron, and his brother, Hywel (GLIG poem 8).

If Guto ever visited the home of Elen's family at Rug, there is alas no surviving poetry for them. But we do know that he spent a good deal of time in Edeirnion in the 1450s or 1460s, particularly in the company of Sir Benet, rector of Corwen. Sir Benet is named as the holder of that position in 1439, so it may be that some at least of Guto's verse for him dates back into the 1440s or even the 1430s. Poem 43 is an ode of praise for Sir Benet. Much more unusual, however, is the *cywydd* known as 'Porthmona' or 'Droving' (poem 44). It recounts the adventures that Guto underwent while taking lambs belonging to Sir Benet to be sold in the markets of central England. Even though he had the help of two servants, Guto's attempt at droving was not a success, according to the poem. He lost many of the lambs to accidents, and no-one would offer him a fair price for the rest. He went as far as Coventry and considered going on to York, but in the end he settled for Lichfield and Stafford, before making his way back to Edeirnion. And, although Sir Benet was willing to employ him again, he swears that he will never again turn his hand to such a business. The journey was surely not entirely fictional, for Guto notes in passing in a poem for Sir Siôn Mechain (poem 84) that he had often

undertaken droving for Sir Benet. ‘Droving’ evoked a humorous response by Tudur Penllyn (poem 44a), and the two poets went head-to-head (poem 45). There is also an elegy extant by Guto for Sir Benet, who died in 1464 (poem 47).

A short distance south of Corwen, in the hills above the river Dee between Cynwyd and Llandrillo, stood another of the houses where Guto found a welcome in Edeirnion, that of Ieuan ab Einion of Cryniarth. Guto praised his patron and his wife, Angharad daughter of Dafydd, together with their eight children, giving particular attention to Dafydd ab Ieuan, who had already fought in France and would, later on, hold Harlech castle against the Herberts, Guto’s powerful patrons in south-east Wales (poem 48). In the neighbouring region of Penllyn was another centre of patronage, Llechwedd Ystrad in the hills above Llangywer beside Llyn Tegid. Here was the home of Einion ap Gruffudd, a man whose death Guto lamented in an emotional poem in which he describes Einion as a renowned poet as well as a generous patron (poem 42). He also tells us that Einion was buried on the far side of the Berwyns in the church of Pennant Melangell.

Caernarfonshire is another area where Guto is likely to have worked in the 1450s and 1460s, though barely any of his poems for patrons in this region can be dated with confidence to this time. Mention has already been made of Guto’s visits as a very young poet to Penrhyn near Bangor, where he praised Gwilym ap Gruffudd. He returned to praise Gwilym’s son, Wiliam Fychan, perhaps between 1457 and 1463. The manuscripts offer us two poems of praise for Wiliam, one containing a reference to archery (not unlike the poems for Rhys ap Dafydd and Siancyn Havard) and the other extolling Wiliam’s influence in various regions of Gwynedd (poems 56 and 57). It also mentions that Wiliam controlled the ferry at Porthaethwy which carried travellers between Anglesey and the mainland. Guto would have used this ferry to visit patrons in Anglesey at around the same time as he worked for Wiliam. One family in particular stands out, the descendants of Llywelyn ap Hwlcyn of Prysaeddfed. A poem of praise for one of Llywelyn’s grandsons, Dafydd ap Gwilym of Llwydiarth, in which Guto calls Anglesey the abode of his soul, dates after 1450/1 (poem 62). Guto certainly received plenty of patronage on the island; another of his poems addresses five sons of Llywelyn ap Hwlcyn, perhaps in the 1460s (poem 63). Each brother receives two couplets of praise, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest; the poet then calls to mind Iolo Goch’s *cywydd* for the four sons of Tudur Fychan of Anglesey (GIG poem V). Then each brother is praised again with a further two couplets, likening each in turn to a different precious stone: Meurig is the philosophers’ stone, Huw Lewys a diamond, Dafydd a ruby, Gruffudd an almandine and Rhys a sapphire. The poem is similar to ones composed by Guto for the four sons of Edward ap Dafydd of Bryncunallt and the eight children of Ieuan ab Einion of Cryniarth, but of all these works the poem for the five Anglesey men is the most exquisitely crafted.

2.4 *Dafydd ab Edmwnd*

Guto engaged in poetic debates with several of his colleagues – Hywel Dafi, Tudur Penllyn, Syr Rhys and Llywelyn ap Gutun – yet his relationship with one of the most influential poets of the fifteenth-century retains an element of mystery. There are attributed to Guto some three *cywyddau* satirizing Dafydd ab Edmwnd of Pwll Gwepa in Northop (poems 66, 67 and 68). Dafydd was a poet who came to prominence by winning the silver chair at an *eisteddfod* held in Carmarthen around 1451 under the patronage of Gruffudd ap Nicolas. In his turn he would be the bardic teacher of Gutun Owain and Tudur Aled.

One at least of the satires appears to have been incited by a boast made by Dafydd, perhaps during his attempts to reform the poetic craft (*cerdd dafod*) at the Carmarthen *eisteddfod* (66.6,

26). It names five poets who will hunt Dafydd like a pack of hounds. The authorship of the poem is dubious, however, for Guto himself appears to be one of the poets addressed by the author. Not named in this poem is Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen, yet his satire against Dafydd ab Edmwnd may relate to the same controversy, since it too refers to Dafydd's boasting in connection with other poets (including, perhaps, Guto, see GDID poem XXIII). It is also reminiscent of another *cywydd* by Guto (poem 67). This one is a more superficial satire on Dafydd ab Edmwnd's wretched appearance. Dafydd is portrayed as a soldier who, for all his bravery in war, bears decidedly unheroic marks of battle. He is described as 'Syr Rhys's dwarf' as regards prophetic poetry (67.46), words that are echoed by Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen in a similar context, but the significance is obscure. Somewhat clearer is the context of another satirical *cywydd* by Guto, for it is a response to a poem by Dafydd ab Edmwnd that has survived (poem 68a). The allegation, true or false, was that Guto had ruptured himself while weightlifting, a sport that Guto describes as a specialism of his in another poem (33.39–46; cf. also 126.16). There is an *englyn* by Dafydd on the same subject (poem 68b). Both Dafydd's satire and Guto's response (poem 68) are thoroughly scatological. The latter focuses on Dafydd's outsize and diseased penis. None of these poems can be located or dated, but references by Guto to Syr Rhys and a mention of Guto's wife by Dafydd ab Edmwnd make the 1450s or 1460s likely. Since there is no authoritative edition of the works of Dafydd ab Edmwnd, nor any detailed study of his attempts to reform *cerdd dafod* at the Carmarthen *eisteddfod*, we can only speculate as to why Guto satirized him more than any other poet. They were certainly very different characters, one a physically powerful ex-soldier who composed poetry for a living, the other of short stature and in no need of patronage to sustain himself. If Guto disapproved of Dafydd's actions at the *eisteddfod* – and it is worth noting that Guto, in spite of having a career of some two decades behind him by 1451, is not known to have attended the event – there is no suggestion in his poems to that effect; Llawdden, in contrast, expressed his views in some satirical stanzas (GLI poems 34, 36). At present it is not possible to say whether the increasingly rigorous metrical standards of Guto's later work reflect the Carmarthen reforms or developed independently of them.

2.5 William Herbert and his family

Undoubtedly Guto's most prominent patron was William Herbert of Raglan. He was the son of Sir William ap Thomas, and he inherited Raglan castle following the death of his father in 1445. It is uncertain when Guto first caught his attention, but in all likelihood the poet's services were amongst the other things passed down to Herbert from his father. Guto was a frequent visitor to Raglan and witnessed Herbert's extraordinary rise from local squire to major player in English politics during the series of confrontations known as the Wars of the Roses.

The years 1449–53 were troubled ones for the English kingdom. In 1449 the French launched a devastating campaign against the English-held towns in Normandy. The English could not withstand the power of Charles VII, and in less than a year they lost every last inch of Normandy. At the battle of Formigny in 1450, the complete defeat of the English sealed Normandy's fate. Among the captains captured on the field was the young William Herbert. He was freed on the payment of a large ransom and managed to return to Wales safe and sound. Matthew Gough, on the other hand, was less fortunate, being killed in London in 1450 during the revolt of Jack Cade. Then in 1453 came another blow: the conquest of Gascony by the French. It had been an English foothold on the Continent since the twelfth century. Only the town of Calais now remained of all the possessions of the English Crown in France.

Following the disasters in France the 1450s were a difficult decade. Cade's revolt broke out in Kent, and though it was quickly extinguished, tensions rose between Richard, duke of York, and the supporters of King Henry VI. Many of Guto's patrons, being tenants and followers of

the duke, were bound to be drawn into this quarrel. Meanwhile, Guto continued to practise his profession. He should not be thought of as a 'Yorkist' poet during the 1450s, nor for that matter should his patrons who supported the duke be so termed. The dispute between the duke and Henry VI's extended family was over respect and influence around the person of the king, not a struggle for the Crown itself. Not until the end of 1460 did Richard, duke of York, claim the throne, and even as late as this there are signs that many of his followers were unwilling to go so far as to unseat an anointed king. The vast majority of the landowning class in both Wales and England wished only for a fair settlement between the two sides. We may well imagine that a professional poet who depended on a varied network of patrons across Wales would be particularly eager to see such quarrels amongst them put aside.

By the 1450s William Herbert was one of the duke of York's chief supporters. Guto would have been a frequent visitor to Raglan during this decade, but any poems he composed directly for Herbert during this time have perished. There remains, however, the debate poem which attacks Hywel Dafi for spending too much time sponging on Herbert's hospitality at Raglan (poem 20). It is the first of Guto's extant poems under William Herbert's patronage and may be dated to before the end of 1453, since it refers to Herbert's mother Gwladus Gam as still alive (though it should be noted that her death date of 1453 is not beyond doubt). A degree of circumspection towards Herbert is, perhaps, the most noteworthy feature of this poem, in spite of the leg-pulling directed at the luckless Hywel (who composed a reply, poem 20a). Even at this early stage, Herbert was not a man to be crossed.

The son of Richard, duke of York, was crowned king as Edward IV in 1461. The new king's grip on Wales was fragile at best. Only the south-east was at all secure under the authority of the earl of Warwick and William Herbert, who were cooperating happily enough at this stage. Further west or north than that the authority of Edward IV barely made itself felt. It was these anxious months following the battle of Towton (end of March 1461) that saw the beginning of the process by which William Herbert was elevated above any other individual in Wales. He was appointed justiciar, chamberlain, steward and chief forester of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, with his brother Richard as deputy. Moreover he and his brother-in-law, Walter Devereux, were commissioned to recover the earldom of Pembroke and its appurtenances. After that Herbert was given control of the lands of the Buckingham family in Wales, among them the lordships of Brecon and Newport. Then the new men headed west. Jasper Tudor, Henry VI's half-brother, fled northwards to escape them, leaving his castle of Pembroke to fall into Herbert's hands. Inside Herbert discovered the four-year-old Henry Tudor, son of Jasper's brother. Herbert took him home with him to Raglan, where Henry was raised until 1469. In the meantime, Jasper Tudor had been defeated at the battle of Twthill near Caernarfon, and was forced to flee to Ireland.

As a consequence Herbert now dominated south-west Wales. The only place to reject his authority was Carreg Cennen castle, held by Tomas and Owain, sons of Gruffudd ap Nicolas. Herbert had to lead a second campaign, in 1462, to take the stronghold from them. We do not know whether Guto was an eyewitness of Herbert's campaigns, but he would later refer to them in glowing terms in the *cywydd* he composed for Herbert at the zenith of his power in 1468 (poem 21).

The year 1468 was an important one in Guto's career. It was then, at last, that Edward IV decided to deal decisively with the rebels in Gwynedd and granted Herbert the authority and resources he needed in order to bring the region to heel. Indeed, Adam Chapman (unpublished paper delivered at the Guto'r Glyn Conference, Aberystwyth, 2012) has shown that the sum

expended on the 1468 campaign was comparable to the cost of one of the yearly expeditions to Normandy earlier in the century – an enormous sum of money to spend on the capture of one castle, however strong. The suspicion must be that Harlech was no more than the icing on the cake, and that the authority of Edward IV was barely recognized anywhere in the three shires of North Wales. That would explain why Herbert and his fellow-captains had to bring a huge army and devastate much of Gwynedd before its inhabitants would submit. Harlech castle surrendered to him on 14 August, and Guto congratulated Herbert in a most powerful poem (poem 21). He also begged Herbert to show mercy to the gentry of Gwynedd, among them many of Guto's own patrons. It would be intriguing to know when, and in front of whom, this poem was performed, as well as the degree to which its contents were acceptable to Herbert, and whether any others were involved in commissioning it as a mark of their submission to the conqueror from the south. All we can actually be certain of is that it was composed before 8 September, when Herbert was made earl of Pembroke. It is inconceivable that such an honour would not have been mentioned had it already been bestowed.

One possible beneficiary of Guto's appeal to William Herbert was Sir Roger Puleston of Emral, if the editor of poem 74 is correct in believing that it was composed by Guto between March 1469, when Roger was pardoned by Edward IV, and his death later that year. Roger had been one of the leaders of the Lancastrian cause in north Wales during the 1460s. Guto mentions 'toilsome years' and the price Roger had to pay; whether this refers to his maintenance of the Lancastrian military effort or the cost of purchasing the king's, and perhaps also Herbert's, favour, Guto does not tell us.

Two other poems belong to the few months between the triumph of the Herbert brothers and their fall in July 1469. One of them (poem 23) describes Herbert as an earl. He had gone to Gloucester to settle some dispute there, doubtless on behalf of Edward IV; it is noteworthy that Guto's subsequent elegy for Herbert should refer to enmity between Herbert and the men of Gloucester. By now Herbert had moved on to London, and the poet worries for his safety among the treacherous English. Modern readers may feel this poem to be prophetic, but there is no way that Guto could have foreseen the events of the summer of 1469, and it is mere romancing to attribute the poem to a time when Herbert had departed on the fateful campaign of Banbury: Herbert is in London, not facing rebels in the English midlands. The second poem of this period is addressed to Richard Herbert (poem 22). It praises the ambitious building work he undertook at Coldbrook, his home near Abergavenny. Once again, it is hard for us to read about this lavish expenditure without recalling that within a very short time Richard would be laying his head on the block. The date of this poem is assured because, like the previous one, it refers to William Herbert as an earl.

2.6 The battle of Edgecote (Banbury), 1469

In July 1469 the extraordinary career of William Herbert came to a sudden and violent end. A rebellion broke out in the north of England. Though its leader was one 'Robin of Redesdale', it is clear that Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, and George, duke of Clarence, were the real instigators. Edward IV went north to face the rebels, summoning Herbert from south Wales and Humphrey Stafford, earl of Devon, from south-west England to join him. Edward became isolated at Nottingham, but the rebels passed him by. On 24 July they encountered William Herbert's army near Edgecote, a village in Northamptonshire close to Banbury. Humphrey Stafford was apparently never present or else he fled during the battle. Herbert's forces were overwhelmed and he and his brother were captured. They were removed to Northampton where they were condemned to death by Warwick and Clarence. Richard Herbert was beheaded on

26 July and his brother likewise the following day. A codicil to his will that Herbert wrote that morning is still extant.

The effect of these events on the coterie of poets who had assembled around Herbert during his years of ascendancy was devastating. Guto'r Glyn was one so affected. His response was the elegy edited as poem 24, composed a few months afterwards (it mentions the death of Humphrey Stafford at Bridgwater in Somerset on 17 August). Without a doubt it is one of the most powerful elegies in the Welsh language. It opens by comparing the fall of the Herberts to the dance of death, a devotional image that had recently reached Britain from the Continent. It continues, lamenting the fact that an axe blade had now touched the neck that once had worn a golden collar. The classical three Fates are blamed for cutting the life-thread of this earl. The poet yearns to see vengeance done on the English for this disaster. Nothing remains for him now other than to yield to madness and wander the forests like the wild man Merlin. Yet the poem ends with a hint of hope, as the poet remembers that the sons of the dead earl, along with his half-brother, Sir Roger Vaughan of Tretower, are still alive to protect the land.

3. The final twenty years, c.1470–90

3.1 The 1470s

Guto's dealings with the Herberts did not come to an end with the death of William Herbert. In fact, he continued to work for members of the family well into the 1470s. The first of these, perhaps, was William Herbert's son, also William Herbert, second earl of Pembroke. A *cywydd* of praise for him may belong to the winter of 1471/2 (poem 25). It urges him to take vengeance for the death of his father in 1469 and that of his uncle, Sir Roger Vaughan, in May 1471. In this poem there is both stern political advice and firm moral counsels regarding the fitting way for a young nobleman like William to behave – not, in Guto's view, by exhibiting pride bordering on arrogance, but rather by following the example of his father. It would be interesting to know what the young William Herbert thought about this advice, given that he was son and heir of one of the most single-mindedly self-promoting Welsh landowners of his age. In any event, the authority of the second earl of Pembroke was to fade over the course of the decade, along with his influence at court.

Another poem from roughly the same time is the one for the young earl's mother, Ann Herbert, wife of the first earl (poem 26). It is mainly a poem of consolation, and is one of the few works that Guto composed directly for a female patron; even so, her son receives considerable attention within it, being portrayed as the ideal successor to his father. The second earl is mentioned also in another poem from the early 1470s, a praise poem for his older half-brother, William Herbert of Pembroke and Troy (poem 28). This latter William Herbert was an illegitimate son of the first earl. Both he and his half-brother, the second earl, are praised as worthy heirs to their father; indeed, Guto insists that William Herbert of Pembroke and Troy looked the spitting image of the first earl. His loyalty to his legitimate brother is also stressed. William was treasurer and steward of the earldom of Pembroke while his father was alive, and he probably lived there for the most part. Though Guto names places in the Pembroke area, it is quite possible that the poem was performed at one of the Herbert seats in Gwent.

A notable poem that may have been commissioned by the Herberts is the praise of Edward IV (poem 29). The internal evidence suggests that it was performed between 1473 and 1475, possibly in the presence of the second earl and during the king's visit to Shrewsbury in June 1473. If so, the poem may be taken as an attempt by William Herbert to regain the favour of the king, indeed as a statement of loyalty to Edward at a time when Herbert influence was in decline. The poem is an interesting combination of traditional prophetic themes, including

crusade to the Holy Land, together with a more direct appeal to the king to meet the needs of Wales as regards order, law and religion.

If Guto did indeed perform this poem in front of the king in Shrewsbury in 1473, he may have sung for others in and around north-east Wales at around this time. A few miles south-east of Oswestry lay the home of Sir Roger Kynaston of Knockin, whose praises Guto sang soon after May 1471, when Roger was knighted on the battlefield of Tewkesbury (poem 79). This honour is mentioned by Guto, as well as the fact that Roger Kynaston had earlier fought at Barnet in April 1471, where Richard, earl of Warwick, was defeated (indeed, it is possible that it was Roger who killed him). The poet makes much of Kynaston's loyalty to Edward even after the king was forced to flee to the Continent in 1470, and explains cheekily that he has waited until Kynaston was knighted before singing his praises.

Another patron whom Guto most likely visited in the first half of the 1470s was Syr Siôn Mechain, rector of Llandrinio, a few miles south of Knockin. Two of Guto's praise poems for him survive. One of them (poem 84) is a lively piece in which Guto refers to two of his other patrons in that part of the world who were now deceased, Dafydd Cyffin of Llangedwyn and Sir Benet, rector of Corwen; the poetry addressed to both has been discussed above. Siôn would undoubtedly have known these two men. Now, Guto insists, it is Siôn who fills the gap they have left behind. He asks here a question that may be seen in various forms in other poems of the poet's old age: *Pwy a 'm pyrth, o syrth oes hen?* ('Who will aid me, if old age descends?', 84.51). Guto certainly received patronage from Siôn on more than one occasion, for he also composed a praise poem in honour of the rector's new house in Llandrinio (poem 85). In the opening lines Guto reveals an awareness of the work of his predecessor, Iolo Goch, recalling the patronage that Iolo received from Ithel ap Robert of Coedymynydd in Flintshire, while in conclusion he blesses the house, just as he had done for the newly rebuilt Moeliwrch early in his career (poem 90).

North of Llandrinio and west of Oswestry lay the lordship of Chirk, of which Sieffrai Cyffin was steward in 1475. Guto had already sung his praises at the beginning of the 1460s when Sieffrai was constable of Oswestry castle and Guto himself a burgess in the town, but now Sieffrai was pursuing a legal career, though he still continued to offer patronage to Guto. It may have been around 1475 that Guto composed his *cywydd* asking Sieffrai to give a hunting horn to Siôn Eutun of Parc Eutun south of Wrexham (poem 99). It is full of inventive metaphors and was very popular indeed among copyists – in fact, the earliest copy is in the hand of the poet Hywel Dafi. Guto tells us that Sieffrai not only excelled at law but was also proficient in *cerdd dafod*, the traditional art of Welsh verse. Another poem that may date from around this time is the *cywydd* asking Robert ab Ieuan Fychan of Coetmor in Arllechwedd to give two hunting dogs to Sieffrai Cyffin (poem 100). Apart from its masterly descriptions of the dogs, the poem is noteworthy as a commentary upon the conventions of request poetry at the time. It praises Sieffrai for not requesting a major gift such as a horse or an ox, and his choice of smaller animals such as birds and dogs.

In Maelor Saesneg south-east of Wrexham was the home of Siôn Hanmer of Halghton (d. 1480), who may have patronized Guto on two occasions in the 1470s. Siôn was a nephew of Owain Glyndŵr, a fact which Guto notes in his *cywydd* of praise (poem 75). It was on Siôn's behalf that Guto composed his poem to request a hunting knife from Gruffudd ap Rhys of Yale. It describes the knife in a series of elegant metaphors, mentioning also two smaller, companion knives that resided in the same sheath, 'daughters' to their larger 'mother' (poem 76).

One of the latest poems that Guto composed for a southern patron links two border regions where Guto was very active in the 1470s, namely Powys and Gwent. Walter Herbert was a son

of William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke, and younger brother of the second earl. Where he was living when Guto composed for him is unclear. Like the rest of his family, he would surely have had a residence somewhere in Gwent, but the poem makes much of Walter's connections with Powys and was most likely performed there (poem 27). The lordship of Powys was placed in the Herberts' care in 1467, the heir being underage, and would seem still to have been under their control when Guto praised Walter Herbert c.1475. The Herberts' relations with the king had deteriorated by 1478 at the latest, and it seems that Guto distanced himself from his Herbert patrons at this time as well. Old age and the resulting need to limit his bardic circuits probably account for this, but it may not be a coincidence that Guto's involvement with the Herberts came to an end just at this difficult time in the family's history when they had lost political favour. The poem for Walter Herbert is Guto's last surviving work for any member of the family.

Guto ceased to visit centres of patronage in Gwent by c.1475. His last southern poem may be one that belongs to the Golden Valley of Herefordshire. It was there that he returned to sing an elegy for one of his oldest patrons, Henry Griffith of Newcourt (poem 36), who died in 1476 or 1477. It will be recalled that he and Guto were contemporaries who had fought together, feasted together and, perhaps, practised feats such as stone-throwing together since the 1430s, and there must have been more than mere platitudes to the grief that Guto expresses in his elegy. There is also a hint of guilty feeling in the retraction that Guto makes of his criticisms of Henry Griffith's miserly conduct (cf. poem 35); were the two never reconciled before Henry died? This poem closes the door on Guto's long and distinguished involvement with patron houses in south, and especially south-eastern, Wales. It is not likely that he ever returned to south Wales, and with very few exceptions his patrons from the later 1470s onwards were exclusively northern.

Although no poems can be assigned to a certain date in the second half of the 1470s, we do possess a most interesting record of Guto's activity as a poet in Shrewsbury in 1476–7 and again in 1477–8. Both Guto and a man called *Walter Harper* (his harpist, undoubtedly) are described as *ministrall[es] principis* 'minstrels to the prince' in the bailiffs' accounts for the town on two separate occasions during those years (Harper 2013: 185). Neither the precise significance of the term nor the nature of the occasions is clear, but it seems that Guto and Walter (?Gwallter) did perform in front of Edward, Prince of Wales, who was King Edward IV's eldest son (born 1470). There is no way of knowing what poems Guto performed for him, whether they were specially commissioned or already in existence (one such might have been the poem of praise for the prince's father, Edward IV). In any event, the record is an indication of Guto's prominence as a poet as well as his enterprise in finding new sources of patronage. It is worth remembering that the chief councillor to the young prince was his uncle, Anthony Woodville, a learned man and poet who visited Renaissance Italy, while the prince's chamberlain, Sir Thomas Vaughan of Monmouth, was of Welsh descent.

Before we leave the 1470s, we should take note of three poems which indicate that Guto was still active in the north-west as well. None of them can be dated with much accuracy, but their strict metrical craftsmanship and some references in them are consistent with the 1470s. In terms of *cynganedd*, the poets of the fifteenth century gradually made more frequent use of consonantal types of *cynganedd*, and less use of the *cynganedd sain*. As the century progressed, the poems became generally stricter (LIU 99–100). The *cynganedd* is particularly strict in the elegy for Hywel ab Owain of Llanbryn-mair, who was a cousin on his mother's side of Sieffrai Cyffin of Oswestry and, like Sieffrai, was trained in *cerdd dafod* (poem 40). Another elegy showing similar metrical technique is the one for Meurig Fychan ap Hywel Selau and Angharad daughter of Dafydd of Nannau near Dolgellau (poem 50); this married

couple had patronized Guto during the 1460s. Like another couple elegized by Guto, Dafydd Llwyd ap Gruffudd and Catrin daughter of Dafydd of Abertanad, Meurig Fychan and Angharad seem to have fallen victim to the plague. They were interred together at Cymer abbey. But this elegy for the lord and lady of Nannau lacks the intense grief expressed in the Abertanad elegy, most probably because they lived to a ripe age and left behind adult children. The poem does not mention the heir, Dafydd ap Meurig Fychan, but another poem survives which thanks him and his wife, Elen daughter of Hywel, for the gift of a horse (poem 51). Apparently Dafydd had heard that Guto had lost his black horse and sent him a new one, one that could trot as well as gallop and was suitable to carry a blind man such as the poet now was. Though Dafydd was the donor, the last line praises Elen for urging her husband to make the gift. The poem is less strict in its metrical technique than the elegy for Dafydd's parents, a feature that could suggest an early date, yet the talk of blindness looks forward to the numerous references to the poet's loss of his sight that are scattered through his verse in the 1480s. At the end of the poem Guto contemplates the possibility of spending his final years in 'the house of St Bernard', perhaps Cymer abbey, which stands close to Nannau. Clearly by the end of the decade Guto was beginning to foresee a time when old age would force him to stay in one place. It would, however, be a different abbey that ultimately offered him a home.

3.2 The 1480s

The earliest definitely datable poem of the 1480s is an elegy. Soon after the death of Edward IV on 9 April 1483, two of Guto's northern patrons, Wiliam Fychan ap Gwilym of Penrhyn near Bangor and Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd of Corsygedol south of Harlech, also died. Guto's elegy for the latter (poem 52) opens with a lament for all three deaths; the numerous references to places in the Dee valley suggest that it was performed in the home of Gruffudd's brother Elisau in Gwyddelwern rather than at Corsygedol itself. Guto seems to have been on circuit in the north-east towards the end of 1483 and early in 1484, since it was sometime during those months that he praised Tomas Salbri ap Harri Salbri of Llewenni near Denbigh (poem 71). Tomas (d. 1490) was an old man at the time, and the poem pays much attention to his wife and their ten children, especially to the younger Tomas Salbri and a daughter, Elsbeth. These two were named after their parents. Though Guto plays exuberantly and with great metrical ingenuity on the figure ten at the end of the poem, nevertheless the work as a whole has a thoroughly professional feel and maintains a certain distance from its patrons. In this regard it is quite different from others which belong to this later period in the poet's life, though another comparable example, and one which may belong to the same bardic circuit, is the praise of Syr Hywel ap Dai of Northop south of Flint, in which the patron is referred to throughout in the third person (poem 70).

After the death of Edward IV his younger brother seized the throne on 6 July as Richard III. Edward IV's rightful heir, the young Prince of Wales for whom Guto had performed in Shrewsbury between 1476 and 1478, was imprisoned by his uncle in the Tower of London. There he and his younger brother Richard were, in all likelihood, murdered on the orders of Richard III, sometime around the late summer of 1483. Richard was not king for long. Though he managed to put down a revolt that broke out in autumn 1483, support continued to grow for the sole remaining representative of the Lancastrian cause, a man who was aiming at the throne but who had been living in exile in Brittany since 1471 – Henry Tudor. Henry returned to Britain in the summer of 1485. He landed near Milford Haven and proceeded through Wales to Bosworth Field in the English Midlands. There on 22 August he defeated the forces of the king. Richard was killed on the battlefield, and Henry (VII) was then acclaimed on the spot. At least three of Guto's patrons fought at Bosworth. Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Abermarlais in the Tywi valley was one of Henry Tudor's chief representatives in Wales. He was knighted three

days after the battle of Bosworth. Guto's poem in his praise was composed soon after the victory (poem 14), and its interesting reference to *lladd y baedd* – 'the killing of the boar', that is, Richard III – may lend credence to the idea that it was Rhys's men who killed him. Since Guto appears to have abandoned his bardic circuits to south Wales some time before 1485/6, the poem was probably conveyed to Abermarlais and performed in front of Rhys by a *datgeiniad* or reciter. Another possibility is that the poem is wrongly attributed to Guto, since the manuscript attribution is not beyond question. Yet it is not impossible that Guto had been associated with Rhys even before Bosworth.

Siôn Edward of Plasnewydd in Chirkland seems to have fought at Bosworth in the forces of Sir William Stanley. Stanley had been a strong Yorkist supporter for most of his career, but changed his colours in 1485, perhaps unconvinced of the legitimacy of Richard III's rule, and supported Henry Tudor instead. At Bosworth he remained on the sidelines of the battle. Only at the last moment did he direct his forces to intervene against the king. According to Guto, Siôn took a good deal of time to return home from the battlefield: his *cywydd* of praise celebrating the homecoming notes that two months had elapsed (poem 107). The poem's air of intimacy, the praise for Siôn's wife, Gwenhwyfar daughter of Elis Eutun, together with the praise for Siôn's patronage that we encounter in other poems, all combine to show clearly that Guto had performed for the couple before and knew them well. We encounter here too the image of the poet as an archer aiming arrows of praise at his patron, an image used extensively by the poet earlier in his career. This poem for Siôn portrays a friendship between poet and patron over and above a purely professional relationship.

The same is true of other poems composed in the same personal vein at around this time, only these were for Gwynedd patrons. The third of the men who fought for Henry Tudor at Bosworth was Wiliam ap Gruffudd of Cochwillan in the Ogwen valley. His reward for his service was to be appointed sheriff of Caernarfonshire for life on 24 September 1485, and Guto did indeed address him as sheriff soon afterwards (poem 55). Wiliam is praised for his valour, his generosity and his appearance, especially his long white hair, contrasted subtly with the poet's baldness. Guto clearly felt very much at home at Cochwillan, indeed he insists that he will not leave until his dying day. Such statements were generally stereotypical, but this instance seems slightly more believable than most and the same can be said for the ending of the poem of thanks for a horse which Guto composed for Dafydd ap Meurig Fychan of Nannau (poem 51). It looks as though Guto headed north-westwards at the beginning of 1485 to perform for one of his old patrons in Anglesey. In winter 1484, while Henry Tudor was still in France and Richard III still trying to strengthen his grip on the throne, Guto was in the cantref of Penllyn when he heard that Huw Lewys of Prysaeddfed had suffered an accident (poem 64). Around the beginning of December, so it appears, Huw fell off his horse while trying to cross the dangerous Malltraeth marsh on the island. Huw and his brothers had been the object of earlier praise by Guto, possibly in the 1460s (poem 63). Two of the brothers had passed away in the meantime, leaving the oldest, Meurig, and the youngest, Rhys, together with Huw himself. Just as he had done at the time when Hywel ab Ieuan Fychan of Moeliwrch injured his knee (see poem 92), Guto expresses his sympathy for Huw by declaring that he is himself prostrate on account of Huw's accident. Unlike the poem for Hywel, however, Guto pushes his imagery to extremes here. He declares that he has himself suffered virtually the same accident as Huw, since the tears he and others shed for his patron were so numerous as to form a sea in which the poet all but drowned. This extreme empathy seems to have irked a wandering poet who was active in Gwynedd at the time, namely Llywelyn ap Gutun. Llywelyn, from Molverley near Welshpool, was both poet and harpist, and furthermore a rather tempestuous individual. In what was very probably part of the Christmas celebrations of 1484 at Llwydiarth in

Anglesey, Llywelyn conjured up the scenario that Guto himself had drowned at Malltraeth (poem 65a). Guto's body is described, submerged beneath the waves – his corpse is full of mackerel, cod and eels – and then the adventures of his troubled ghost on dry land. Our poet responded to Llywelyn's satire in March 1485, so far as we can tell. His own humorous satire against Llywelyn ap Gutun accuses the latter of becoming roaring drunk at the expense of Huw Lewys and his relative Cynwrig ap Dafydd and of being quite inebriated when he imagined the whole story of Guto's drowning (poem 65). This accusation was a neat tactic, for it both made a fool of Llywelyn and at the same time indirectly praised the generosity of the patrons, which of course had been the point of the original *cywydd* in honour of Huw Lewys that set off the whole incident.

It is evident that Guto was dividing his time between Gwynedd and the north-east from c.1480 until at least the end of 1485. It was not just secular patrons whose hospitality enticed him to these two areas. There was also extensive patronage available from two of the most prominent clerical patrons of the age, Rhisiart Cyffin, dean of Bangor, and Abbot Dafydd ab Ieuan of Valle Crucis.

3.3 Rhisiart Cyffin, dean of Bangor

Rhisiart Cyffin ab Ieuan Llwyd was appointed dean of Bangor sometime between 1472 and 1478. Some of Guto's verse for him may date to the 1470s. He was a cousin of Wiliam ap Gruffudd of Cochwillan and belonged therefore to one of the most influential families in Gwynedd, as well as being a supporter of Henry Tudor. He was dean of Bangor throughout the 1480s and was an exceptionally generous patron towards at least seven poets. None of the six poems Guto'r Glyn composed for him can be precisely dated, and it is notable that none is a straight praise poem. Instead Guto praised the dean through other genres, notably in poems of request and gratitude for gifts.

Though Rhisiart was a cleric by profession, as a bardic patron he behaved in the manner any secular patron would have done, exchanging gifts with his poet and with relations near and far. Huw Bulkeley ap William Bulkeley of Beaumaris was a second cousin of his, and on Huw's behalf Guto requested a falcon from Rhisiart (poem 60). At the time Huw was deputy constable of Conwy castle, an office he held from 1482 onwards. Another *cywydd* asking Rhisiart for a gift is the one on behalf of Sir Gruffudd ab Einion of Henllan near Dinbych, who was also claimed as a relative of the dean (poem 61). Sir Gruffudd wished to replace the thatched roof of his home with slates from Snowdonia, and Guto is certain that Rhisiart will be willing to send them by sea from Bangor to the estuary of the Clwyd and then upstream to Henllan. The poem offers a valuable glimpse of the beginning of the slate industry in Gwynedd.

Guto composed two poems expressing gratitude to Rhisiart Cyffin in exchange for two personal gifts, one a purse and the other a rosary. The poem about the purse has more to say about the donor than the gift itself (poem 58). In places it echoes a poem of thanks for another purse that Guto received from Catrin daughter of Maredudd of Abertanad some two decades earlier (poem 87); in that work the gift is lavishly described. The poem in gratitude for the rosary, a string of twelve beads used to count prayers addressed to the Virgin Mary, differs in its emphasis from the purse poem, for it does contain many inventive descriptions of the gift (poem 59). Furthermore, while the purse poem lauds the material quality of the gift, the praise for the rosary ends with the poet yearning to become a hermit. This poem ends with a prayer for long life for Rhisiart Cyffin, very much in the spirit of the *genre*, but the rosary poem is much more introspective – another sign, perhaps, that Guto's mind was on withdrawal from the world.

If Guto was hoping to find shelter in Bangor during his last days, he made no direct mention of it in his poems. It was to the Dee valley, and especially to the abbey of Valle Crucis, that he turned in the end. Two poems are extant which reveal how Guto's professional work forged a link for him between Bangor and Valle Crucis. The first is a poem requesting two oxen from each of four patrons in north-east Wales; all eight animals were to be given to Rhisiart Cyffin (poem 108). In the case of two of these men, no other poems addressed to them by Guto survive: these are Dafydd Llwyd ap Tudur of Bodidris and Siôn Trefor of Pentrecynfrig. It is likely, though, that a substantial body of work addressed to the latter has been lost. Of the remaining two, one was Siôn Edward of Plasnewydd, praised after Bosworth, and the other was Abbot Dafydd ab Ieuan of Valle Crucis, whose relations with Guto's Glyn will be discussed below. The second poem which links Bangor and Valle Crucis may reveal why Guto chose to retire there (poem 109). In it he tells us that he fell and broke three ribs. The accident happened near the abbey and forced him to seek medical care there. But Rhisiart Cyffin heard of his plight and sent him a kiss from Bangor which was to be delivered by the lips of Abbot Dafydd, who was then visiting Bangor, or so it seems. Though Guto did apparently recover, the accident must have put paid to any thoughts of circuiting far from Valle Crucis for some time.

3.4 Abbot Dafydd ab Ieuan

Dafydd ab Ieuan was appointed abbot of the Cistercian house of Valle Crucis c.1480, succeeding another man who had extended patronage to Guto, Siôn ap Rhisiart. In contrast to Guto's verse for Siôn, however, which has entirely disappeared, the manuscripts preserve a rich body of poetry composed in honour of Abbot Dafydd. Some of these works are considered to be among the best that Guto's Glyn composed. As we saw was the case with the Rhisiart Cyffin poems, it is difficult to date any of the poems addressed to Dafydd ab Ieuan with precision, though the likelihood is that Guto was receiving patronage from the abbot throughout the 1480s. There are indeed points of resemblance between Rhisiart Cyffin and Abbot Dafydd. Both were probably conceived outside wedlock and both had to seek papal permission to hold clerical office. Both were also keen supporters of Henry Tudor. It was Dafydd who was commissioned by Henry VII in 1485 to be in charge of establishing the king's Welsh lineage. Finally, both men were exceptionally generous to Guto's Glyn in his old age. This generosity was enough to incite the envy of other poets. Syr Siôn Leiaf (son of the Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf who satirized Guto in poem 93) composed a praise poem for Rhisiart Cyffin in Bangor which includes open satire of Guto's Glyn, Hywel Grythor and Gwerful Mechain (Salisbury 2011: 101–3). Ieuan accused his fellow-poets of taking advantage of Rhisiart Cyffin's generosity by feasting too extensively at his home in Bangor. Guto refers to this dispute in a poem relating to another, similar accusation against him, this time at Valle Crucis (poem 116). Three poets, so he claims, have challenged his right to enjoy the patronage of Abbot Dafydd there: Maredudd ap Rhys, Gruffudd ap Dafydd (a relative of Guto, according to the poem) and Edward ap Dafydd. Guto's defence of his place at the abbey is masterly: however blind he may be, and however weak his body, his poetic inspiration (*awen*) is still strong enough to defeat the feeble verse of his fellow-poets, even if they stem from a better lineage than he does.

And in Valle Crucis he stayed, circuiting the local area and returning frequently (especially over winter) to praise Abbot Dafydd in more than one *genre* of poem. His poem asking Trahaearn ab Ieuan of Pen-rhos near Caerleon for a loan of the 'Book of the Grail' (poem 114) was composed on behalf of the abbot. The very book in question has survived to the present day: it is Peniarth 11, a copy of a Welsh translation of some French Grail stories. By his own admission Guto was old and blind by the time he came to make this request, and it is unlikely that he voiced it himself in front of Trahaearn (which does not exclude the possibility that he had worked for Trahaearn in the past). More probably the poem was performed for him by a

datgeiniad or professional reciter, either at Trahaearn's home in Pen-rhos or some other residence of his near Haverfordwest. Another of Guto's works in honour of the abbot was his *cywydd* thanking him for a buckler, a kind of small, round shield, perhaps performed at the abbot's home in Trefor (poem 110). The buckler was a personal gift which Guto intended to offer up to the abbey (together with a short sword) when he died, in the hope that the weapons would be depicted in stone on his grave. It is an echo of his earlier days serving the duke of York as a soldier in 1441, and a strong indication that Guto wished to be remembered as a soldier as well as a poet (see further Day 2013: 256, 280–1). A poem which Guto composed for another abbot, Dafydd ab Owain of Strata Marcella (poem 115), was either commissioned by Abbot Dafydd of Valle Crucis or arose through Guto's connections with him. This is one of only two poems by Guto relating to Strata Marcella (the other is poem 82, the elegy for Llywelyn ab y Moel who was buried there in 1440), and it is certain that many others have been lost. Dafydd ab Owain is praised for his gifts as a husbandman and especially for the horses that he bred. The poem closes by wishing to see Dafydd ab Owain raised to a bishopric; he was indeed to receive that honour, becoming bishop of St Asaph in 1503.

Besides these occasional poems, Guto composed three straight praise poems for Dafydd ab Ieuan of Valle Crucis. One of them is a *cywydd* (poem 112). It devotes much attention to the abbot's work in rebuilding and repairing the abbey. The picture it paints of the flourishing life of the abbey is a happy one: its storerooms are full of corn and its buildings have been reroofed with oak timber from nearby Bron Hyrddin. The other two poems are similar in tone. Both are very skilfully wrought odes (*awdlau*), and clearly show that old age had in no way impaired Guto's ability to compose in such an intricate style. One (poem 111) probably dates to his early days as the abbey's poet. It praises Dafydd ab Ieuan as the ideal abbot, while expressing the poet's intent to settle in the abbey at the end of his life. In contrast to the similar wishes expressed in poems for other patrons, the poet's desire – 'I will come there to my cherished land ... I will lie amongst its roots' (111.62, 64) – was realized this time. No doubt Guto had already received the abbot's promise in this regard. The same wish is repeated in the other ode (poem 113), but this one is much more focused on the life of the abbey and on the talents of Abbot Dafydd especially. The poet mentions the orchards, woods and bee gardens, alongside the abbot's physical strength and his particular interest in the arts of poetry and the harp. There remain two other poems for Dafydd ab Ieuan, both among Guto's very latest works. One (poem 117) is a *cywydd* of praise which is famous for its opening lines: 'Where are the old men? Have they passed away? / Tonight I am the very oldest.' The rest of the poem, if not quite as melancholy as this, is nevertheless in the same vein. The poet admits that his bardic circuit has shrunk, though he is not yet wholly confined within the walls of the abbey:

Clera Môn, cael aur a medd,
Gynt a gawn, Gwent a Gwynedd;
Clera'n nes, cael aur a wnaif,
Yma 'n Iâl, am na welaf.

Once I used to be able to go on a bardic circuit to Anglesey, / I would receive gold and mead, I would go on a circuit to Gwent and Gwynedd; / now my circuit is closer to home, I receive gold / here in Yale, because I cannot see.

He names three other patrons alongside Abbot Dafydd. These three keep him from despair in his old age: Siôn Trefor of Pentrecynfrig, Siôn Edward of Plasnewydd and Dafydd Llwyd ap Tudur of Bodidris. Here are the self-same four patrons from whom Guto requested eight oxen on behalf of Rhisiart Cyffin in poem 109. The other *cywydd* is not so well known, but if

anything it is even more significant (poem 118). It was sung in answer to a request by Abbot Dafydd: ‘He asked of me, and commanded it, to glorify God before man.’ All his life Guto had been a master of the praise of men; now, in his last years, his patron was reminding him that he should rather sing the praises of God in order to prepare his soul for the next world. Of course, there is praise of Dafydd himself for making the suggestion, but most of the poem is indeed given over to God, something which is otherwise extremely rare in this poet’s work. Guto contemplates his own old age, the mystery of the Trinity, Christ and creation, before focusing on the death of Christ and his own impending end. He reaches the conclusion that his task must now be to repent and worship God, in the hope that he will later find a berth in heaven.

This reflective poem may well be the last of Guto’s surviving works. He was probably at Valle Crucis when he composed two elegiac stanzas for fellow-poets, Dafydd Nanmor and Ieuan Deulwyn, who died sometime between c.1485 and c.1490 (poem 54). These stanzas are the only evidence that he knew either man, both of whom were apparently interred at the Cistercian house of Whitland in Carmarthenshire. As with some other poems of the time, they may well have been conveyed southwards by a professional reciter. Another stanza which belongs to the end of the poet’s life is poem 119, lamenting the troubles of old age:

Gwae’r gwan dau oedran nid edrych, – ni chwardd,
 Ni cherdda led y rych,
 Gwae ni wyl yn gynilwch,
 Gwae ni chlyw organ a chlych!

Woe to the weak man, two lifetimes old, who doesn’t look, – who doesn’t laugh, / who doesn’t walk further than the furrow’s width, / woe to him who doesn’t see distinctly, / woe to him who doesn’t hear an organ and bells!

A note in the hand of Thomas Wiliems (1590s) next to a copy of this stanza tells us that Guto failed to attend Mass at the abbey because he slept through the noise of bells and organ. On awakening and realizing his error, the blind old poet seems to have blunderingly interrupted the service. The account is strongly reminiscent of Guto’s own description of himself in his *cywydd* of praise for Abbot Dafydd, where he notes how laboriously the monks had to look after him in his decrepitude.

Guto’s last years at Valle Crucis may have been in the status of a corrodian, someone who had secured a place for himself in an abbey during his old age, either through payment or in recompense for past service (Bowen 1995: 153–6). Alternatively, he may have been a kind of poet-in-residence. Whatever the formal arrangement, the monks may have had little say in the matter: in Abbot Dafydd Guto had found a patron willing to sustain him for the rest of his life. The sheer variety of the verse composed in honour of Dafydd reflects the close relationship between the two men. There is poetry of request and gratitude as well as all kinds of praise, sung in various metres and involving many different themes not often encountered in such works, including challenges issued to other poets and intense religious verse. There is a pleasing symmetry in seeing Guto’s Glyn spending his last years under the care of Abbot Dafydd at Valle Crucis, given that his early career was so strongly supported by another abbot, Rhys of Strata Florida. The two abbots enjoyed very different fates, one dying a debtor in prison, the other successful to the point of achieving a bishopric before he died. We do not know for sure when Guto’s Glyn himself died, but it is not likely to be far distant from c.1490, he being some eighty years old at the time. Having sustained Guto’s muse when he was alive,

Abbot Dafydd performed a final service for him by acting as patron for his elegy, sung at the abbey by Gutun Owain (poem 126). Guto'r Glyn was buried, according to his own wishes, in the soil of Valle Crucis.

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