

To what extent was the rebellion of 1400 a rebellion of Glyndŵr and the *uchelwyr*?

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## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will consider the many different issues in Wales in the fourteenth century and look across Welsh society as a whole to establish to what extent the rebellion of 1400 was a rebellion of Glyndŵr and the *uchelwyr*. The description *uchelwyr* is used in the sense addressed, but discarded, by Professor R. R. Davies; that of a freeman latterly upgraded to a squire (Davies, R. R. 1969, p. 152). Glyndŵr was undoubtedly an intelligent and charismatic leader of the Welsh rebellion and a man of proven and singular ability shown, not least, by the longevity and extent of the rebellion and that he remained free from betrayal. Nor was he alone. If Glyndŵr was the finest of the squirearchy there were certainly others who were also of exceptional ability. He held a significant estate, by Welsh standards, and was 'a complete Marcher gentleman' (Williams, 1985, p. 106); educated at the Inns of Court in London, married to an English woman of some standing, he had served with the Earl of Arundel and was a recognised member at the court of Richard II. This is confirmed in the *Brut y Tywysogion*, one of the few primary sources available of the period although of doubtful accuracy, there having been a number of translations into Welsh from the original Latin. Iolo Goch's poem praising Glyndŵr's home at Sycharth has survived as a primary source and describes a mature and greatly respected host who was welcoming and generous (Conran, T. 1967, 153-6). Although Iolo had to sing for his supper evidence on the site has confirmed the extent of the property; Glyndŵr had much to lose.

Edward's destruction of the power of Gwynedd, the death of Llewellyn the Last and his creation of a castle-ringed, virtual colony had ended hopes of Welsh independence from English dominance. There followed severe pecuniary demands, privileged conditions for English settlers in the castle towns, ruthless seizure of land and restricted opportunities for advancement of the Welsh, inevitably men, that exacerbated racial differences; these were some of the many underlying issues in post-Edwardian Wales. If, as John Davies wrote, 'The Edwardian settlement had created much racial

bitterness among the Welsh' (Davies, J., 1994, p. 177) it was also true that in some Marcher Lordships 'there was already a tradition of serving the conquerors' (Davies, J., 1994, p. 178). Tradition it might have been, but the upper levels of administration were denied to the *uchelwyr*, leaving only positions as lower officials as they balanced precariously between 'loyalty and disaffection which ultimately exploded in the Glyn Dŵr rising.' (Williams, 1985, p. 96). Glyndŵr and his fellow squirearchy were a capable class frozen out of their traditional roles in Welsh society. These harsh restrictions, even allowing for the many instances when the rules were ignored, had existed for a century and were a long running fuse that led to these closely related well-to-do gentlemen, the native squires, leading and sustaining the rebellion from 1400 (Davies, R. R., 1968, p. 152).

Glyndŵr managed to unite practically all of Wales, enjoying a strong broad-based support his forebears could only have imagined and he was able to defy an albeit weakened English king for over a decade. His achievement was all the more exceptional bearing in mind the fragmented and complex nature of Welsh society following Edward's conquest. Such was the strength and depth of the rebellion that it has been described as 'a Marcher rebellion and a peasant's revolt which grew into a national guerilla war...' (Williams, 1985, p. 108), 'the protest of the poor' and 'a national revolt' (Davies, J., 1994, p. 196), and involving 'people from all walks of life' (Jenkins, 2007, p. 112). Primary sources for this period are few and the content of many are dubious but Parliamentary Rolls for the period are a rare, contemporary and invaluable record of the time, albeit from an English perspective.

In his recent examination of Glyndŵr's rise and fall, Brough details 'how several rebel groups came to be led by one man' but does not consider Glyndŵr emerges as 'the de facto ruler of Wales' until nearer 1404 (Brough, 2017, pp. 6-7). This dissertation will consider evidence of a broad-based

support for the rebellion and the probable reasons for such a following bearing in mind Welsh society in the late thirteenth century. Also, the divided nature of Welsh society prior to the rebellion will be considered and whether the existence of those divisions supports Brough's argument that it was some time before all elements of the rebellion coalesced under Glyndŵr's leadership. Evidence from English chronicles of the time (Marchant, 2014) will be considered while acknowledging they are largely the records of the victors and not of a Welsh viewpoint. If, considering the number and extent of grievances at all levels of society against their English overlords, two frustrated English officials could write that 'the Welsh, you know, are Welsh' (Davies, R., 1973, p. 37-8); there was certainly much for the Welsh to be Welsh about by the end of the fourteenth century.

Strangely, there was little surviving openly anti-English poetry from Welsh court poets of the fourteenth century though such sentiment was evident, if not obvious, in some poetry of the day. Many *uchelwyr* were sympathetic to a more emotional reaction to English dominance as vaticinary poetry of hope for an independent Welsh future remained popular (Roberts, 1960, p.388). Poets might have disappeared from the doors of the *uchelwyr* after 1536 but in 1400 they were culturally alive and occasionally speaking of dissent, albeit lightly, to their edgy patrons.

There was also discontent in the church, with frustration by the Welsh who were virtually ignored in the appointing of bishops and other privileged positions. One of the only two Welsh bishops, John (Ieuan) Trefor, appointed in 1395 was sufficiently disillusioned that he sided with Glyndŵr from 1404 and 'worked wholeheartedly in the Welsh cause' (Jones, E. J., 1941, p. 93). Adam of Usk felt his Welshness had disadvantaged his career and he too, albeit for a short time, backed Glyndŵr.

The arrival of the plague in 1349 ultimately reduced the population by about a third with lowly bondmen probably suffering the greatest losses. As land was deserted due to death or flight from

taxes and rent, Marchers seized land through escheat procedures and the increasing use of English land law, particularly in North Wales. The subsequent growth in the land market resulted in frustration and resentment for many but also the beginnings of estate acquisition for the enterprising few. With these major changes in Welsh society and with English administration little better than the plague, it is hardly surprising there was general and deep felt discontent. The Parliamentary Rolls of 1401 are important evidence of the extent of that discontent.

Despite the paucity of primary sources there is a great range of historiography discussing Glyndŵr, from Lloyd's *Owen Glendower* of 1931 through to works by Rhys Davies, Howells on Glyndŵr in Gwent, Brough's recent addition and many others. Secondary sources will be used to discuss the disparate nature of Welsh society, the early sporadic outbreaks of revolt and the reasons for such a disaffected population who, at least in the early rebellion, preferred the unknown with the rebels. Most, apart from Brough, take the view that it was Glyndŵr's rebellion from 1400 but Brough also emphasised its important place in the European conflict. Ultimately this dissertation will show that a rebellion should not have been a surprise and that, if Glyndŵr and his *uchelwyr* led the insurgency, they relied on the willing support of most of the population of Wales. The Pennal letter sent to the French king in 1404 is an excellent primary source that shows Glyndŵr's wider vision of an independent Wales. It also prompts the question as to whether he harboured this objective in September 1400.

## Unsettled Wales

Welsh rulers such as Rhys ap Gruffudd and the Llewellyns had hobnobbed with Marcher lords or the English royal court but this behaviour was largely fruitless (Pryce, H., 2007, p. 5) however, a century after Edward's conquest Welsh gentry were serving their English masters. Although barred from serving as constable of a castle, they could serve as deputies and the need for them to do so was made plain to royal justices in Pembroke who were told that it was not easy to control Welshmen 'except by one of their own race' (Roberts, G. 1960, p. 385). However, the strength of the rebellion appeared to show that many had been serving their English masters through gritted teeth. Edward's anti-Welsh laws were a consistent issue, exacerbated by the harsh tax of 1292 and an overbearing English administration resulted in many minor rebellions by the *uchelwyr*. Rhys ap Meredudd of Dryslwyn in 1287, rose as a result of his humiliation by Edward's justiciar at Carmarthen (Jenkins, G. H. 2007, p. 107). The 1316 revolt of Llewellyn Bren was also a personal grievance but received widespread support 'throughout the Welsh community of upland Glamorgan' after much oppression and disillusionment and was a comment on the 'breadth of resentment within the lordship' (Davies, R. R. 1987, p. 388). Significantly, this was not Dryslwyn in Pura Wallia, but Glamorgan in the Marches and was followed by further troubles in the 1340s as the result of English chauvinism and Welsh 'light-headedness' (Davies, J., 1994, p. 184). This was in sharp contrast to the 'embryonic Welsh official class' detectable by 1300 who were ready to 'come to terms with the new order' (Davies, J. 1994, p. 179) and were busy occupying the more modest offices available to them.

Throughout the fourteenth century the economy in Wales had suffered severely, bad harvests in 1314 to 1318 presaged the 'hungry 1330s'. The arrival of the Black Death in 1349 and further outbreaks in 1361-2 and 1369, led eventually to a population reduction of about a third. The demand for food fell, there was a labour shortage and arable land reverted to grazing leading to

problems with tenancies of the deceased, defaulters and those who had fled as these were subject to reversion by escheat causing much resentment. Welsh rulers in North Wales particularly had taken to English land law for their personal advantage but in the south constant division of land reduced its viability, small tenants became landless labourers as they sold out to their better off neighbours, including some *uchelwyr* who were beginning to build estates. The amount raised by the Marcher lordships in a land as poor as Wales was extraordinary and was worth over £5000 a year resulting in a 'smouldering sense of anger' at the system that raised such amounts. (Hodges, G. 1995, p. 8). This anger was not eased especially during times of heightened tension, when incomers, Welsh included, took advantage of land market opportunities caused by those who had died or fled during the plague (Griffiths, R. A. 2000, pp. 706).

The clergy in Wales fared no better, John (Ieuan) Trefor was appointed bishop of St Asaph in 1395 but his loyalty to Henry had been 'severely tested' particularly, after he had 'earnestly warned parliament not to drive the Welsh to revolt by harsh measures' regarding Glyndŵr's complaint against Grey, only to have his advice scorned (Jones, 1941, p. 95). This was a man of some status and importance who probably joined Glyndŵr's cause late in 1404 and to be contrasted with the more lightweight and less reliable Adam of Usk who incurred Henry's wrath by associating with Glyndŵr's rebellion (Given-Wilson, 1994, p. 522) although he changed sides again as the rebellion faltered. The appointment of the king's favourites to Welsh sees left the Welsh clergy and laity with a 'sense of grievance' (Hodges, 1995, p. 10), further grounds for Hopcyn ap Thomas of Ynystawe to observe that the Welsh were 'suffering pain .... and exile in their own land' (Davies, J. 1994, p. 192).

Military opposition was demonstrated, albeit vicariously, by Owain Lawgoch self-styled 'true heir of Aberffraw' who trod a path from his birthplace in Surrey to fight for the king of France against

England (Davies, J. 1994, p. 194). He was known and probably enjoyed some support in Wales and with some financial backing from the French king, sufficiently worried the English authorities who arranged his demise before he could successfully bring an army to invade Wales. In times of unease, tensions frequently resulted in reversion to Edward I's original restrictions on Welsh residents in towns, as burgesses complained of breaches of privilege and physical attacks. This caused much hostility 'not simply a matter of race or birth: it was more complex' involving rights and customs, town charters and privileges (Griffiths, R. A., 2000, p. 706). There were tensions as far away Oxford when English students rioted against their fellow Welsh students in 1388 and 1389 (Davies, J. 1994, p. 193).

Given such widespread frustration throughout Welsh society it seems strange that court poets are not recorded as writing openly anti-English works in the fourteenth century although there was concern the *uchelwyr* could easily slip into English ways and some in 'prominent in royal service' had received praise poems, although the occasional barbed reference was not unknown (Roberts, G., 1960, pp. 389-90). However, vaticinary verse was popular in Wales as elsewhere in Europe but the poets' support for Glyndŵr was only one of many factors. Tensions in Wales were recognised further afield. When Henry made his son Prince of Wales in 1400, a French knight remarked 'But I think he must conquer Wales if he will have it...' (Williams, 1985, p. 105), this prescient observation by a French knight seems to confirm, even if Henry was unaware of it, that there was much amiss in Wales.

The words of another war leader might be used to describe Glyndŵr, ‘a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma’, there are few hard facts and much conjecture, confused by many different views of him that have emerged in the last 600 years. His father had served the earl of Arundel as steward of Oswestry and this seems to have been a family tradition (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 147). Glyndŵr was related, through his grandmother, to lesser lords of the March and was a ‘product of two cultures – that of the Anglo-Welsh March’ (Roberts, G. 1960, p. 393), he was educated at the Inns of Court in London and married Margaret Hanmer the daughter of Sir David Hanmer who would become joint justiciar of South Wales. He served with the warrior Sir Gregory Sais in 1384 (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 146), with Richard’s army invading Scotland in 1385 and probably served with the earl of Arundel from 1387 (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 147) surviving the execution of the earl in 1397, and the disposal of Richard II. Despite being a product of two cultures, his serving with Fitzalan and hobnobbing at Richard’s court, Glyndŵr ‘for all his apparent sophistication, was steeped in tradition...’ (Howells, 2003, p. 23) and his comfortable seat at Sycharth, surrounded by a close and admiring circle of family and friends, was confirmation of his cultural preference. There was talk of a ‘*mab darogan*’ (man of prophesy) and poets reminded him of his princely bloodline, but as Brough argued, people in Wales did not support him for that alone (Brough, 2015, p. 27) and Glyndŵr himself did not use the title of Prince of Wales in an official capacity until 1404 (Brough, 2017, pp. 6-7). After some success with Fitzalan, including his naval victory in March 1387, Glyndŵr was overlooked when others of Fitzalan’s esquires were knighted in celebration (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 149) and it has been suggested Glyndŵr ‘may have been left with a sense of grievance’ (Hodges, 1995, p. 22). If Glyndŵr settled down to domestic affairs at Sycharth feted by Iolo Goch and other admiring poets, his peace was disturbed by the powerful Marcher Reginald de Grey, his acquisitive neighbour who occupied land Glyndŵr considered his own. Grey was a force to be reckoned with and he was much in favour with the new king Henry IV or, more correctly,

Henry needed all the support he could get following his disposal of Richard, particularly from powerful, strategically placed Marchers like Grey.

Grey appears to have taken possession of Glyndŵr's land prior to October 1399 and Glyndŵr then probably waited for redress and his right to the land to be confirmed (Brough, 2017, p. 26). Parliament's derogatory response referred to the Welsh as 'rascally bare-footed people' despite archbishop Trefor's sage warning against provoking the Welsh to revolt (*Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 278). Glyndŵr's deliberate or unavoidable failure to answer Henry's summons to join his expedition to Scotland was treated as treason and, after receiving his appeal result, Glyndŵr responded, with friends and family by sacking Grey's town of Ruthin in September 1400. Glyndŵr had cause to feel seriously aggrieved and as a minor Marcher, must have felt his loss of personal standing keenly particularly as he had acted correctly only to receive an arrogant dismissal. Why raise his standard at the age of 40 and risk his comfortable living at Sycharth? He might have thought a brutal response would draw attention to his justified grievance and gain him a reversal of the decision and a pardon, hoping perhaps Henry would not risk a conflagration in Wales.

There had been earlier troubles. In 1399 as Richard's army travelled to Carmarthen from Ireland 'the Welsh had attacked the king's troops – clearly an act of rebellion' also, as 'the Duke [Henry] and his people set out from Chester, the Welsh did them great damage' (Brough, 2015, p. 9-10). Further, the Tudor brothers are said to have been involved in a revolt immediately before, or at the same time as Glyndŵr in September 1400 (Brough, 2017, p. 25), and there is no evidence this, or their taking of Conwy castle in early 1401, was connected to Glyndŵr's revolt.

When Glyndŵr raised his revolt he was supported by friends and family and they would have been aware of the great risks they faced and the need for support from across Wales to improve their

chances of success in any larger enterprise. As the rebellion grew, powerful and influential Welsh leaders like Hywel Gwynedd, Rhys Gethin of Nant Conwy and the tactical Gwilym ap Gruffudd of Penrhyn. In his chronicles written over a century later, Edward Halle accused Glyndŵr of taking advantage of the weakened king and of using 'faire flattering wordes' (Marchant, 2014, p. 3) to entice the Welsh to rally to him. Halle's chronicle seems to be a prime example of history written by the victor but in 1401 Glyndŵr might well have had an alternative, greater intention in mind if an initial foray brought no restitution. Wales was a 'highly complex environment' in 1400 (Brough, 2015, p. 7) but if the resulting revolts were anti-English this did not apply to Glyndŵr whose supporters included his brothers-in-law, who were English noblemen (Brough, 2017, p. 28). It seems unlikely such an environment, even with an almost universally dissatisfied peasantry, would have delivered one leader so quickly, this was still after all, the divided Wales of Gwynedd and Deheubarth. The course of the rebellion shows there was little need for Glyndŵr to use words of flattery to gain support and if he was not yet controlling the weather, Glyndŵr probably had a good idea which way the wind was blowing in the late summer of 1400.

## Rebellion

Glyndŵr's initial action in September 1400 was predictably against Grey, razing his town of Ruthin and benefiting from market day plunder before continuing the destruction of other towns in north-east Wales. The support Glyndŵr received, particularly from his fellow *uchelwyr* and brothers-in-law, combined with his own military experience and knowledge of Henry's court, suggests his actions in September 1400 were more than the instant reaction of an irate minor Marcher. The contemporaneous *Historia Vitae* records Grey's withholding of Henry's letter requesting arms as the major catalyst for Glyndŵr's action (Marchant, 2014, p. 3) however there were also many grounds for the impoverished majority to revolt. If 'Glyndŵr was proclaimed Prince of Wales' (Jenkins, 2007, p. 111) by his fellow rebels it was unlikely to have carried much further. Brough discounts the claim as deriving from English legal proceedings and as being inaccurate (Brough, 2015, p. 16-17).

he seems to have read feelings in Wales well as Henry's position was weak and his attention more focussed on matters in Scotland and France. Also, as 'surviving Marcher lords lacked experience' and with long neglected castles (Hodges, 1995, p. 44), if there was a time for a '*mab darogan*' there was not going to be a better time than 1400.

It is argued that Glyndŵr's raids on Grey's land in the northern March boroughs were a response to the privileges of English burgesses and Welsh feelings as 'second-class citizens in their own country.' (Davies, R. R., 1973, p. 49). However, although distinctions between Welsh and English had developed an edge, there was more 'compromise and co-existence rather than of tension and confrontation' in the fourteenth century (Davies, R. R., 1973, p. 49). Doubtless the revolt fanned racial hatred as time wore on but numerous individual instances of arrogance and misrule probably did more than anything else to gain Glyndŵr and the *uchelwyr* support for the rebellion.

Despite difficult communications in Wales in winter, on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1401, scarcely five months later, the matter of the Welsh rebellion was the subject of an ordinance before parliament complaining:

‘that now Welsh scholars who had been residing in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had left for their country; and also that Welsh labourers who had been living in various parts of the English realm had suddenly fled the said realm for their same country of Wales, and had and strongly equipped themselves with arms, bows, arrows and swords and other weapons of war such as they had not done at any time since the conquest of Wales.’ (Parliament Rolls, 1401, item 15)

Word of one or all of these revolts seems to have reached different areas of England and been the subject of an almost instant and vigorous response, suggesting that even if revolts in Wales were sporadic, the reaction from the student *uchelwyr* and labourers alike presaged the reaction that was to follow in Wales as a whole. These were people from Wales who had sought advancement in England and, presumably, were likely to have made a significant commitment to do so; not a commitment to recant lightly particularly when the rebellion was in its infancy. The return of Welsh students and workers at that stage was an important indicator of opposition to English misrule but not of any national rebellion. Reference is made frequently to this entry in the Parliament Rolls and it is of pivotal importance as one of the most reliable records of Welsh reaction to the revolts, it is particularly relevant as it concerns ‘Welsh labourers’ who were clearly not of the *uchelwyr*. Such an important document seems to confirm Glyndŵr’s reading of the wind and doubtless others of the *uchelwyr* began to think of their own position.

Widespread rebellion did not take place immediately after Glyndŵr razed Grey’s Ruthin, indeed early in the following year the Tudor brothers Rhys and Gwilym took Conwy castle by stealth before negotiating terms for relinquishing the castle and receiving a pardon. There was also an uprising of peasants around Abergavenny in Gwent at the same time, this was a ‘disturbance without any obvious signs of leadership provided by any agents of Owain at all’ (Howells, 2003, p.

21). However, this was a riot and for those involved, without a leader, it was a serious matter to rise up against their lord for a perceived injustice; it was not merely ‘an isolated incident to release three men from the gallows’ (Brough, 2015, p. 23-4) and punishment was severe. The matter of a pitched battle at Hyddgen in the summer of 1401 is contested by Brough who refers to Adam of Usk and his failure to report Hyddgen in the disturbances of 1401 (Brough, 2017, p.45). Perhaps, since this was an English defeat, Adam of Usk thought it politic to ignore such an event on his return to the king’s chilly forgiveness. However, there was also fighting on the border near Welshpool and Glyndŵr supposedly took the castle at New Radnor.

In the south, crown tenants and subjects refused to pay their dues to the crown (Brough, 2017, p. 45) however, although some of these refusals might have been prompted by opportunism, such blatant actions by tenants supports the existence of a general and deep sense of discontent not restricted to dissatisfied *uchelwyr*. Even the abbot of Tintern petitioned parliament in 1401 for relief from orders relating to his Llandaff diocese due to ‘great resistance to his demands there’ (Parliamentary Rolls, 1401, Appendix 4). Doubtless expediency persuaded some to join Glyndŵr but ‘the list of leading Welshmen who supported him is impressive’ (Davies, J., 1994 p. 197), although there were those such as Gwilym ap Gruffudd who made a timely return to Henry’s favour in 1405 as well as the few like Dafydd Gam of Powys who fought for Henry throughout the rebellion.

The numerous causes of these sharp demonstrations were not helped when Henry’s response was to ‘codify and fortify’ the existing Edwardian status of the Welsh as ‘second class citizens in their own country’ (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 284). Parliament had rebuked the king mildly for appointing the Welsh to offices contrary to the laws of Edward I resulting in strict observation of the original statutes (Parliament Rolls, January 1401, Ord 15). This intimidated, or at least, unnerved the many.

*uchelwyr* who had tried to progress under the long existing *laissez-faire* reality and it further encouraged the thousands of peasants who were drawn to the rebellion due to their economic unrest (Davies, R. R., 1969, p. 152). Perhaps Adam of Usk's anxiety, as a Welshman living in England, was an accurate record of Welsh reaction to Henry's strengthened legislation (Marchant, A., 2014, p. 40-41).

For Glyndŵr in late 1401, there seemed the possibility of surrender on reasonable terms but Henry's advisors lacked the imagination to conclude a settlement (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 106). This would seem to admit the possibility that Glyndŵr's original intention was to reach an agreement on a reversal of the decision that sparked his revolt and be pardoned. If there had been a wider plan for an independent Wales perceived political realities might have seen Glyndŵr back at Sycharth with his stolen land returned and Wales still in need of a *mab darogan*. Presumably the English government considered Glyndŵr a significant enough figure in the rebellion or that he was likely to become so, to attempt to negotiate terms. This would still have left many capable men among the remaining *uchelwyr* and numerous rank and file dedicated to the rebellion at this early stage.

Glyndŵr's objectives at this time in 1401 are complicated by the letters he wrote to Irish lords and the Scottish king, Robert III. The letters show his skill in diplomacy and refer to having waged war for two years, suggesting he considered, or made use of previous outbreaks of violence, as the beginning of a rebellion against the English. He also made a request to 'help me resist my and your enemies' (Brough, 2017, p. 40), suggesting that a year after his revolt began, his intention might have been considering a wider rebellion. Nothing came from these approaches and it was from France that Glyndŵr received assistance, initially in the form of French and Breton soldiers who served with Henry Don in an attack on Cydweli castle in 1403 and later at Caernarfon castle (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 192).

At the battle of Bryn Glas in June the following year Glyndŵr won a significant victory against the forces of Edmund Mortimer where, it was said Mortimer's archers deserted him and fought for Glyndŵr. The matter of Mortimer's 'capture through treachery' was recorded at the time by Thomas Walsingham, a cleric who was not present at the battle (Marchant, A., 2014, p. 69). As Brough notes, there is much troubling about this supposed event and he reasons it was only possible by Glyndŵr placing his men in Mortimer's army prior to the battle (Brough, 2017, p. 57-58). This would have been a considerable achievement illustrating the standing Glyndŵr enjoyed among his rank and file. Mortimer's capture, subsequent allegiance and marriage to Glyndŵr's daughter seems a clear move to a wider, Wales-wide general rebellion. Also significant at this time were the defections of William Gwyn ap Rhys Llwyd and Maredudd ap Llewellyn Ddu important and influential figures in Cydweli and Maelor Saesneg respectively (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 155), this was Glyndŵr winning support for the rebellion from the *uchelwyr*.

The clergy were similarly afflicted by English arrogance even leading Adam of Usk to incur Henry's wrath by his dealings with Glyndŵr and after bishop Trefor's defection late in 1404 he undertook important diplomatic missions to France for Glyndŵr. Adam of Usk gained nothing from his half-hearted support for Glyndŵr before returning to a grudging acceptance by Henry but Trefor remained with Glyndŵr until his death in 1410. The Cistercians in Wales supported Glyndŵr, hence Henry's destruction of Strata Florida in 1401, and one of his keenest supporters, John ap Hywel abbot of Llantarnam, was killed at the battle at Pwllmelyn in 1405. Clerical and English allegiance to Glyndŵr is illustrated graphically by the execution early in the rebellion of the English friar John Sperhauke of Cardiff for supporting Glyndŵr's claims (Davies, J. 1994, p. 197), it also suggests that if Glyndŵr had wider claims they were fairly common knowledge.

After the capture of Mortimer at the Battle of Bryn Glas in 1402 the English government

prevaricated 'over a proposal to negotiate a settlement with Glyn Dŵr' (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 108), as well as negotiations to free Mortimer. A further overture to Glyndŵr seems to strengthen the grounds for believing his original intention might have been only to reclaim his land from Grey but nearly two successful years later he may have felt the full force of the following wind and seen the possibility of a Wales-wide rebellion and of independence.

By 1404 Glyndŵr was enjoying further success when the castles in Aberystwyth and Harlech were taken giving the rebellion a considerable boost and a centre for administration and enabling him to pronounce a parliament at Machynlleth. The Pennal letter to the king of France is of great importance not least because its provenance and authenticity cannot be doubted. It outlines Glyndŵr's intention to create 'two universities or places of general study; namely, one in North Wales and the other in south Wales' (Pennal Letter, Canolfan Owain Glyndwr) as well as establishing an independent Welsh church. Glyndŵr's advisors may have pressed these more grandiose ideas on Glyndŵr (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 171) but the universities and an independent church were primarily for the benefit of the *uchelwyr* not the peasantry supporting the rebellion. However, by now it was clear Glyndŵr's intention was to wrest control back to a resurgent Wales.

In the same year French soldiers helped retake Carmarthen for Glyndŵr, but ultimately French help was thwarted by English diplomats undermining his relationship with France. Glyndŵr's use of the title of prince of Wales in addressing the king of France is of great relevance since this was recognition of his right to rule Wales and that he was of sufficient standing to address a French king. As 1405 closed Glyndŵr was the undisputed leader of the rebellion and retained the support of the majority in Wales. However, although more French troops arrived in Wales in 1405 they had departed by November the same year and by late 1406 there would be no more help from France. In the same year the rebels suffered a defeat Pwllmelyn in 1405 where one of Glyndŵr's brothers was

killed. There are doubts about the Tripartite Indenture detailed in Giles' Chronicle but 'not sufficient to dismiss it as a fabrication' (Davies, R. R., 1997, p. 166) and besides confirming Glyndŵr's unchallenged leadership its terms were overambitious caused, according to Halle, by belief in prophecies (Marchant, A., 2014, p. 89). Had Northumberland's rising succeeded it is difficult to see how the agreement would last with three powers trying to maintain equilibrium. However, many of the English counties to be taken back into Wales held 'a considerable Welsh population' (Davies, J. 1994, p. 201) and perhaps Glyndŵr's borderland expertise was also finely tuned to feelings in those bordering counties as well as the prospects for the expansion of Wales.

As the rebellion began to falter after 1406 many would reconsider their prospects and gradually and inexorably more of the *uchelwyr* returned to Henry's fold; Gwilym ap Gruffudd had gone by 1405 and others like Hywel Gwynedd had been killed. It was a little easier now for those *uchelwyr* more loosely or merely tactically aligned to Glyndŵr, to disentangle themselves and try to recover their former positions. It seems likely that apart from the *uchelwyr*, the soldiery could only follow their local strong men back to English rule or maintain stubborn resistance with a weakened Glyndŵr.

## Conclusion

Glyndŵr was the leader of the longest rebellion against the king of England, he was a towering figure who led a fragmented people in a valiant fight for independence; the rebellion bears his name, he was never betrayed and he is suitably revered.

Was this Glyndŵr's rebellion? His fingerprints are all over the evidence, from his reference in letters to having been fighting from 1399 (Brough, 2017, p. 40) until his disappearance after 1410 to become Henken's 'National Redeemer' (Cronin, 1996) but this is a conclusion clouded by time and historiography.

Glyndŵr would not have taken action in 1400 without thought and, although as a Marcher 'he would avenge his honour with his sword' (Williams, 1985, p. 106), his military experience would have taken him beyond mere retribution. He would have been conscious of the underlying deep dissatisfaction throughout Welsh society and the need to be able to tap this as a resource. It is significant that the early outbreaks were of random peasants' revolts and without real direction from the frustrated but nervous *uchelwyr*. The deep-seated grievances of the long suffering peasantry were the real dry powder of the rebellion Brough's view that Glyndŵr did not have ultimate control until about 1404 seems justified considering the different causes and local circumstances in a divided, impoverished Wales.

With no evidence of a sole leader prior to Glyndŵr it seems clear that others of the *uchelwyr* increasingly led and controlled the early revolts, they were able captains and well-motivated. His fitful action after September 1401 suggests that Glyndŵr sought redress for himself initially but kept open the prospects of a wider uprising.

It is largely accepted the rebellion was also a revolt of the peasants for the reasons outlined and with the evidence of early actions from 1399 and the great feeling of resentment and despair at arrogant misrule. The rebellion relied on the likes of those carrying bows and quivers of arrows back from England, united in their ‘commonality of grievances’ (Brough, 2015, p. 26); they were the willing soldiery.

Glyndŵr and the *uchelwyr* are linked inextricably; he was needed to unite Wales and the *uchelwyr* as his captains and advisors and as the rebellion gathered strength ‘the list of the leading Welshmen who supported him is impressive’ (Davies, J., 1994, p. 197). Glyndŵr was the natural leader drawn to the fore ‘and there is no suggestion that his leadership was challenged’ (Davies, J., 1994, p. 197). Glyndŵr became the undisputed leader of a people who, if they were without a national flag for Wales they certainly held a national banner against English misrule.

It is probably true to say that the rebellion of 1400 was due to the ‘chauvinism of the English’ (Davies, J. 1994, p. 184) who succeeded in uniting Wales in a rebellion of peasants who were led ultimately by Glyndŵr and his *uchelwyr*.

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