

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD Y DYN HYSBYS

Many areas in Wales had no access to apothecaries, and relied on the local healer, or 'Y Dyn Hysbys' ('the person who is known'), a kind of wizard or shaman, who undertook healing an animal or human by using charms and incantations.

There were three kinds of Dyn Hysbys: church men, men who had learned their craft from books, and those who had inherited the power from their families.

The names of many Dynion Hysbys survive, and some were renowned beyond their time and place. A family from Llangurig, Maldwyn was famous for their healing powers.

The Dyn Hysbys had a special place in society, and the tradition did not completely die away until the 19th century. Unlike in Europe, England and Scotland, where witches were persecuted, in Wales:

"ni laddwyd yr un Dyn Hysbys yng Nghymru am ei weithgareddau anuniongred; ac ni chafodd yr un wrach ei llosgi na'i boddi."

"Not a single Dyn Ysbys in Wales was killed for his pagan activities; and no witch was burnt or drowned."



Physician preparing an elixir folio from a manuscript of the *De Materia Medica* by Dioscorides (ca. 40–90 AD).

<https://historymedieval.com/herbal-medicine-in-the-middle-ages/>
Unknown, Baghdad School, Iraq, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD



Image from: <http://www.larsdatter.com/apothecaries.htm>
The British Library

While some dynion hysbys may have taken advantage of credulous and uneducated people, pretending to tell the future, their main activities were healing with traditional medicine, perhaps with the addition of a few spells!

And possibly saying words like 'abracadabra'!

For more information: Byd y Dyn Hysbys by Kate Bosse-Griffiths, Y Lolfa

Text adapted from:

<https://www.ylolfa.com/products/9780904864243/byd-y-dyn-hysbys>
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/disciplines/english/lion/medicine.shtml>
<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/kill-or-cure-10-medieval-medical-practices-and-their-effectiveness/>

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD