

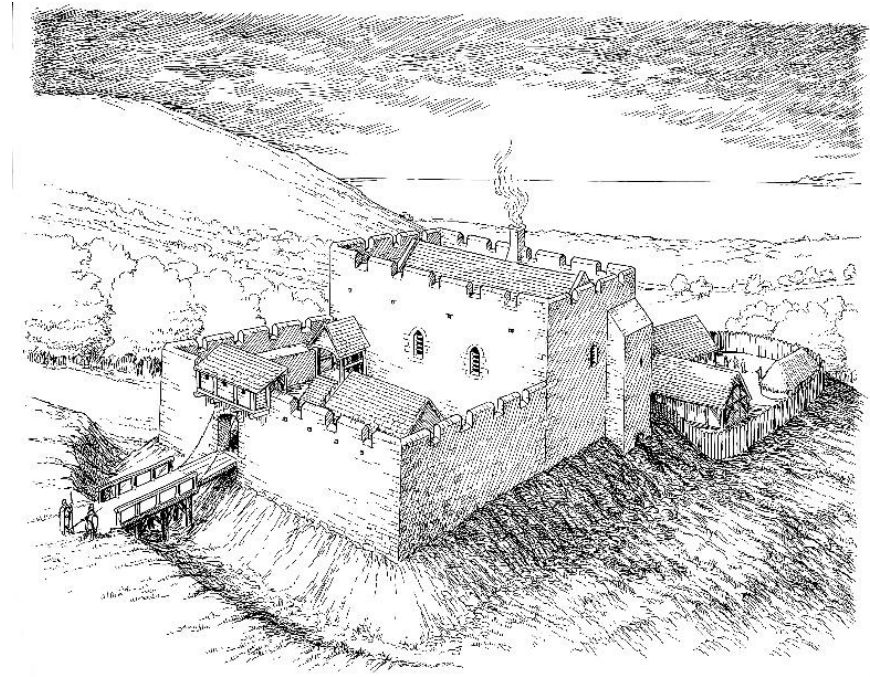
MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD IEUAN GETHIN AT PLAS BAGLAN

Ieuan Gethin was from the family of the Princes of Afan, and lived in Plas Baglan, on Mynydd Dinas, the hill just above the town, during the 1400's. From the start, Ieuan seemed to have had chances to enjoy poetry and writing.

It was his mother Elen who belonged to the Princes of Afan, seen as Welsh nobility, and she lived in the family house of Neuadd Pergwm (Pergwm Hall) in Glynneath.



How Plas Baglan looks today
Photograph by Paul R Davis



How Plas Baglan may have looked when Ieuan Gethin lived there in 1400's.

A suggested reconstruction of Plas Baglan seen from the north, by Paul R Davis (from *Towers of Defiance Y Lolfa* 2021).

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

One of Ieuan's relatives from there, Rhys ap Siencyn, loved old poetry, and had poetry books from earlier times, from poets called Y Gogynfeirdd, Poets of the Princes.

So Ieuan must have liked poetry, and decided to write himself.

We think that Ieuan married Elizabeth, the grand-daughter of Ifor Hael, who was the patron of, or the person who paid, Dafydd ap Gwilym.

Dafydd is agreed today to be the greatest medieval poet in Europe. Bards from North and South Wales came to sing their poetry at his court at Plas Baglan, and these may have included Dafydd.

We have ten of Ieuan's poems left to us and although the language is quite hard for us to read today, they are very interesting.



Poet singing and playing the crwth, or crowd, and old type of violin.
Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed., vol. 7) (New York, NY: The
Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1910)

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

Ieuan wrote a comic poem complaining that a cousin or someone in Aberpergwm had sent three men to steal his wild bees' nests from the trees around his hoe, Plas Baglan. In those days honey was a very valuable food.

The interesting thing about this is that, 600 years later, there are still wild bees' nests in the trees around Plas Baglan.

In the light of the recent Covid epidemic, two poems are especially sad: two of his children died of the plague, and he wrote poems called elegies, to lament their passing.

One was his son, who seemed to have been a musician, although very young. The other was his daughter.

"...a phrifardd
A gwr hy â geiriau hardd"

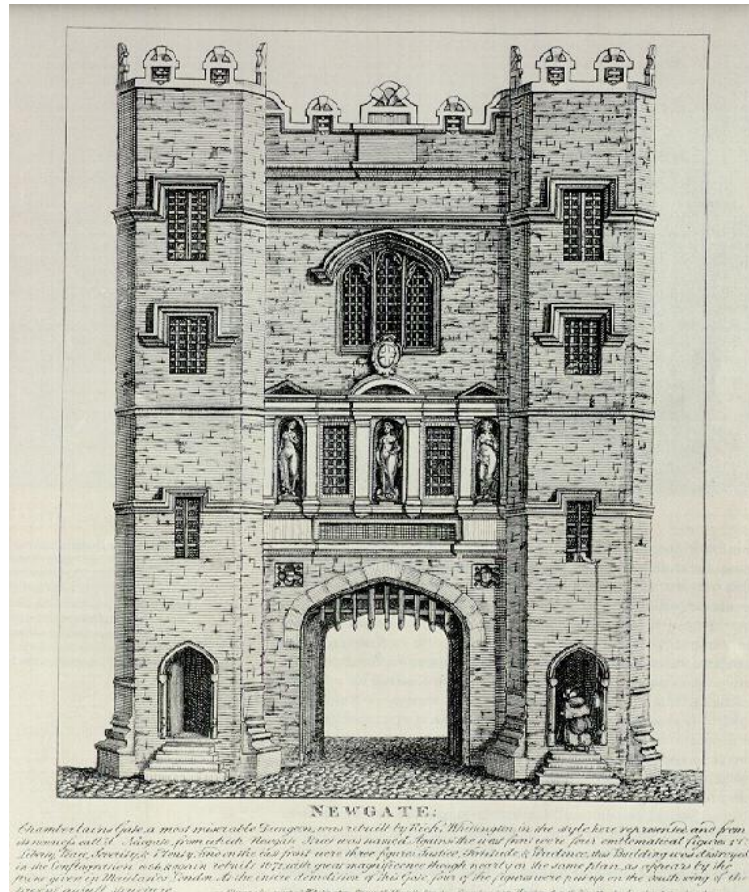
"...a chief poet,
and an audacious man of beautiful words"

Ieuan Du 1460–1480, translated by Ann Parry Owen



Wild bees' nests in trees near Plas Baglan today.
Photographs by Paula Denby, Calon Afan

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD



Newgate Jail in London before the Great Fire destroyed it.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_Newgate.jpg

Ieuan also wrote a poem asking the king of England to free Owain Tudur from Newgate jail, where he had been put in prison. This was because Owain had secretly married the widow of Henry V, Catherine of Valois. She had three children with Owain, and the king of England at the time, Henry VI, did not want anyone giving birth to babies who might grow up to take the throne from him.

Things do not always work out to plan: their eldest son, Edmund, married Margaret Beaufort, who had a strong claim to the English crown, and their son, Henry, became the next king of England, Henry VII (Henry Tudor). Both Ieuan Gethin and Elizabeth his wife were granted pardons for supporting Owain Glyndwr, who tried for many years to unite Wales and take it back off the English king.

So, another interesting person and his family belonging to the Princes of Afan lived in Plas Baglan – a fascinating ruin which stands within yards of the M4 and the Aberafan Shopping Centre!

Text adapted from:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24640151>

Princes of Afan by Tim Rees: www.calonafan.org.