

## Searching for Guto Nythbran

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Many runners over the years have been described as ‘legends’, and some with more justification than others, but, surely, none deserves the laurel more than Griffith Morgan (aka Guto Nythbran). Like everyone of my generation I first learned about Guto Nythbran from Bernard Baldwin, who took me up to Guto’s grave in the ancient churchyard of St Gwynno’s, high in the hills at Llanwonno, two or three miles above Mountain Ash, on the last day of 1958. The occasion was the inaugural *Nos Galan*, and the 100 yards *Nos Galan Gwib* run down Oxford Street that was its curtain-raiser. In true theatrical style Bernard took a small party of a dozen or so up the hill to Guto’s graveside; it included Councillor Arthur Hillier, and about ten other local dignitaries, plus Brian Hewson, Dave Segal and myself; where the words on Guto’s headstone were solemnly read out and the party sang *Calon Lan* (except those who did not speak Welsh, who looked on, wishing they did). Guto’s deeds were recounted and it was here that I first learned that he had dropped dead in 1737 after defeating an English runner named Prince in a 12-Mile race, and after his girl-friend, Siân o’r Siop (Sian of the shop), rushed forward to congratulate him and slapped him on the back. A slap that proved fatal. I also learned that he ran the 12-Miles in that race in 7 minutes within the hour (i.e., 53 minutes), according to his headstone. Is this the only NUTS-type inscription on a tombstone anywhere in the world - event, location, opponent, date, distance, time?

It was in that churchyard in the dying hours of 1958 that I first heard of Guto’s legendary feats - he was a shepherd who could catch a bird in flight, catch a hare, out-run a horse and, one morning, ran an errand for his mother, seven miles to Pontypridd, before the kettle boiled. Such was his reputation that all the locals bet heavily on him on that fateful day, and Siân o’r Siop bet the most.

Later that night, as 1958 was about to slip into 1959, the spirit of Guto ran from St Gwynno’s cemetery to Mountain Ash, in the body of a mystery runner carrying a flaming torch. It turned out to be Tom Richards, a runner from South Wales who had won a silver medal in the 1948 Olympic Games marathon.

An ancient cemetery, tombstones, hymns, spirits, mystery, midnight, and a flaming torch, all combined to give Guto Nythbran a peculiarly mythical and un-athletic aura, like Phillipides, who seemed more myth and legend than a runner who had once lived and breathed. And 12-Miles in 53 minutes made him faster than Nurmi or Zatopek - and over 200 years earlier - a fascinating myth, but with a strong air of unreality about it.

I was reminded of all this again in January 2017, when I went back to Mountain Ash for Bernard Baldwin’s funeral. But things had now changed. Mountain Ash now had a statue of Guto Nythbran, and there is a blue plaque in Guto’s memory on St Gwynno’s church, a Guto Nyth Bran trail, and a commemorative slate plaque at St Barrwg’s Church, Bedwas, where his 12-Mile race finished, and where he died. There are now Guto Nythbran books, songs, poems, and a play. You can find him on facebook, and there are Guto Nythbran teaching aids for schools, on-line school projects featuring him, and the Guto Nythbran app can now be

downloaded from the Apple Store and Google Play. Guto Nythbran is not only a legend, but a legend for our time.

How did all this happen? Bernard Baldwin would have been astonished. After my first exposure, I remembered Guto Nythbran and kept in touch with Bernard, ran again in the Nos Galan Gwib in 1959 and 1960, and in another of Bernard's promotions, the 250yd Taff Street Dash, in Pontypridd, in 1959, and talked to him on and off, about Guto. After half a lifetime, in September 1996 I returned to the topic. I was preparing a paper on the history of sudden death in runners, which I later presented as the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Mic Ostyn Guest Lecture, at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, in December 1997, and which later appeared in 1999, in a shortened version, as, "*Escaping the Philipedes Connection: Death, Injury and Illness in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Sport in Britain*". To help with this, Bernard set out to tell me all he knew about Guto Nythbran, and where his information had come from. Bernard was a letter-writer par excellence and he wrote me long, informative letters, and even two on one day, backed up with long telephone conversations. On 19 September 1996 he wrote, "Only I know it all (I think)", and that was probably too modest; Bernard Baldwin was 71 at the time, and had been living with the story of Guto Nythbran since the age of 25. No-one knew Guto Nythbran's story as well as did Bernard Baldwin; indeed, it had become *his* story, and on 20th October 1996 he wrote of Guto's story "which I think I can claim to have unearthed if nothing else," which he reiterated two days later, "the tales . . . did not exist when I arrived here!"

It all began, he wrote, in 1950, when he was appointed PE & Games & Music Master at Mill Street Secondary Modern School in Pontypridd. Bernard had been born and brought up in Barry, South Wales, and so was new to this part of Wales. The Head introduced him as a former international athlete, and a boy named Rod Isaac went up to him and said, "Sir, there's a famous runner, lying buried in Llanwynno Churchyard."

Bernard gathered a group about ten strong to go on bikes to Llanwynno Cemetery to find out more -

"but no-one in the pub, or Old Nani's House or the Brynsychnant (the tiny restaurant next door) - both adjacent to the church, knew a thing. Then, when we had failed to trace Guto's grave in the churchyard, I went to various libraries, ending up with correspondence with Aberystwyth University and Aber Library. But it was Mr. Davies, Librarian in Pontypridd, who told me that Guto's real name was Griffith Morgan."

But still, "no-one, anywhere in Pontypridd, Ynysybwl or Mountain Ash could tell me anything", he wrote, until a few weeks later he announced some road races for children, and "Johnnie and Mrs Morgan invited me in for a cup of tea afterwards" This was John Edward Morgan who, elsewhere, Bernard described as "in his eighties", and a "90 year old"; and, over that cup of tea, Johnnie Morgan retold Bernard the stories that he knew about Guto Nythbran. He was "very old, but lucid," wrote Bernard. But Johnnie Morgan wasn't the only source, nor, it seems, the best.

“Just who, among the few men, all elderly, who recounted the tales to me is uncertain. Very often one repeated a story told me by another, but certainly the man whose tales made the greatest impact on me was William T. Bowen . . . The T did not stand for any middle name, - he just used it to insert it to distinguish himself from another William Bowen.”

Interestingly, both Johnnie Morgan and William Bowen were Welsh-speakers. William Bowen’s daughter, Roberta, later Roberta Powell, wrote a play, *When Guto Ran*, for the Aberdare *Little Theatre* that was looking for plays for the *British Drama League*; and it won at the *Welsh National Eisteddfod* in 1956. It was in Welsh. Bernard Baldwin’s first visit in 1951 to the Bowen household, in Mountain Ash, where he heard the stories about Guto Nythbran, was a memorable event; so much so, Roberta remembered it 45 years later.

As time went by Bernard accumulated more and more of the story, but his observation that “very often one repeated a story told me by another”, suggests that there may have been a single source behind all their stories, but what that source might be was a mystery. Eventually, however, the story came together.

Guto Nythbran was born at Llwynceilyn, near Porth, and the family moved to Nythbran Farm, from whence came his nick-name, when he was young and, after his death, his body was taken up to up to Llanwynno where he was buried in the shadow of the ancient St Gwynno’s church, just to the right of the south-facing porch. He was 37 years old. Bernard had pulled together Guto’s story, his birth, his family’s relocation to Nythbran, his manager (Siân o’r Siop), and even a story about how he kept his legs warm and supple for races by sleeping in a midden, but was concerned that no-one else was interested in Guto’s story. He, Bernard, had written down the story as he pieced it together but, “there is no-one in Mountain Ash, or even Wales, who would be interested in documenting all this, let alone perpetuating the legend . . .”, he wrote on 20 October 1996. The Council had even allowed his headstone to deteriorate, he complained, which prompted him to recruit Phil Jones to help him refurbish it, a task which took them “5 or 6 successive afternoons” in the early 1990s.

In 1996, in preparation for my paper on sudden death in athletes of the past, I asked Bernard if he had a photograph of Guto’s headstone that I could convert into a slide. It came by return post. When I looked at it, to my embarrassment, I realised that I had never really looked at it before. It is, of course, in Welsh and as I don’t speak Welsh I had always been content to look at it in a general way and stay back while someone, usually Bernard, read the inscription and translated it into English. Here is a translation, sent to me by Bernard, by Bryn Evans, from Llanelli.

IN MEMORY  
OF GRIFFITH MORGAN  
of Nythbran in this Parish who  
died in the year 1737  
at 37 years of age.

He was a great runner.  
He defeated one called PRINCE of  
Bedwas Parish in a race  
of 12 Miles which he completed in  
7 Minutes within the hour.

An active runner and brave -  
a giant who always won  
was Gruffydd, and his praise shall be  
Glorious man, everlasting.

I could now see that after the word *everlasting*, the inscription continued (in Bryn Evans' translation) -

This stone and wording were placed to signify love  
On his dust by his countrymen  
To do justice to his memory.  
EVAN THOMAS, Nantddyrus,  
Llanwyno with the aid of  
charitable friends raised this  
memorial in the year 1866

So, the headstone that has always been the focus for visitors to Guto's grave is Victorian, and not the original! Who were these charitable friends? And who was Evan Thomas? Those friends clearly knew quite a lot about Griffith Morgan in 1866; but what did they know?

I immediately contacted Bernard. He knew nothing about it but agreed to go to Merthyr Library to look at 1866 newspapers to see what they said about it; and, at the end of November 1996, he set out and "went southwards via Abercynon to avoid the mountain-top black ice." This, of course, was before the age of digitised newspaper archives, and Bernard had to make do with a grainy, flickering, yellow, microfilm screen. He began searching the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* for 1866 but lasted only two hours before his eyes gave out, though he did find the report of a footrace between a Cardiff man and a Newport man in May that kept his interest going. Later, he enlisted the help of one of the library's "readers" and the search of 1866 was completed, but it revealed nothing new. In despair, Bernard wrote -

I recognise that unless the Evan Thomas we are seeking comes up with some facts . . . Guto must languish in the category of mythology, however passionately we Welsh would like to cling to the legend.

At that point, Bernard's life and mine found other things to prioritise and the search petered out.

Twenty years later, it was my visit to Mountain Ash in January 2017 that made me go back into my old file of Bernard's letters, and to look at the old photographs of Guto's headstone.

Under a magnifying glass, I realised, to my double embarrassment, that there were still things there I had never paid proper attention to. After the word *everlasting*, in brackets, is the name GWILYM GLANFFRWD, and after the word *memory*, also in brackets, is the name MEUDWY GLAN ELAI, the authors of the words their names follow; just as the words CHARLES WESLEY come after the words of a hymn in a hymn book.

A search for Gwilym Glanffrwd and Meudwy Glan Elai reveals that they were two local poets who were active, and successful, in local and national Eisteddfodau. Their common names were William Thomas (later, Rev. William Thomas) and Evan Richard, respectively. And so it was William Thomas and Evan Richard who were the authors of the wording on Guto Nythbran's headstone; William Thomas was only 23 at the time; Evan Richard was older and little remains of his work, but much of William Thomas's writing has survived, most notably his *Plwyf Llanwyno (The Parish of Llanwyno)* published in Welsh in 1888, under his bardic name *Glanffrwd* (he had dropped the Gwilym), and it is by that name that I will refer to him from now on. Incidentally, Ffrwd comes from *Ffrwd*, a tributary of the *River Taff*, and described by Glanffrwd as "a fussy little river which flows from Mynydd Gwyngul down to Ynysybwl, to lose itself in the Clydach," - it technically means *stream*, and was noted for the coldness of its water.

A second edition of *Plwyf Llanwyno* was published (in Welsh) in 1913, with corrections by Erbin Thomas, Glanffrwd's son, and a revised edition with new spelling (still in Welsh, of course) prepared by Prof Henry Lewis from the University of Wales (Swansea) appeared in 1949. The first English language version appeared a year later, when Thomas Evans published *Glanffrwd's Parish of Llanwynno*, in Merthyr. I now have copies of all four versions in front of me, as I write. Guto Nythbran's story can be found on pages 90-94 of Thomas Evans' text, but he also appears on pages 30, 52, 88, 120, 183, and 193, and there is a photograph of St Gwynno's Church, taken in 1894, and of Guto Nythbran's headstone, that shows that it was originally quite different from when I first saw it; the background was dark, with the lettering picked out in white. We also learn that Guto's original 1737 gravestone is still there, a broken slab engraved with a heart, that almost everyone overlooks as they concentrate on the later, 1866, headstone.

In *Glanffrwd's Parish of Llanwyno* we find that Evan Thomas was Glanffrwd's uncle (his father's brother) and so, perhaps, an interest in Guto Nythbran existed in the family before Glanffrwd came along. Certainly, we know that Evan Thomas, as the chairman of the charitable friends who financed Guto's headstone, and Glanffrwd, who wrote most of the words, must both have known a lot about Guto twenty-two years before Glanffrwd wrote his *Plwyf Llanwyno*, and we should expect others would have known things too. Nevertheless, this is, to date, the earliest known source of the stories about Guto Nythbran (except of course, the headstone), and almost certainly the source of the stories that Bernard Baldwin picked up over sixty years later. I cannot help musing about the sad irony of the first English language version of Glanffrwd's *Plwyf Llanwyno* appearing in 1950 at almost exactly the time that Bernard arrived in Mountain Ash. Here is the source of the Guto Nythbran stories, that Bernard was never able to find.

Here, in the pages of *Plwyf Llanwyno*, we read about, Guto's birth, how his family moved to Nythbran farm, how he became a fleet-footed shepherd, we read about his race against a horse, his errand to Pontypridd and back before the kettle boiled, and the story about the hare, and about keeping his legs warm and supple by sleeping in a midden. And we meet, of course, Siân o'r Siop, and the famous 12-Mile race against Prince, and his sudden death when Siân o'r Siop slaps him on his back.

How did it happen that Bernard was never able to find this source; how is it possible that no-one ever told him about it? Was/is the Welsh-speaking world of the Eisteddfodau and the bardic tradition, so self contained and impenetrable, to a man from Barry?

Although it is true that, to date, 1866 (the headstone) and 1888 (the publication of *Plwyf Llanwyno*) are the earliest modern sources of Guto Nythbran's story, they are not the earliest dates on which Guto's name appeared. In the adjudication of an Eisteddfod in Mountain Ash in 1859, in the Poetry section, *Cutto Nyth Bran* was praised for its substance, while two other 'songs' were praised for the quality of their singing, and for their humour, respectively; overall it was decided that *Cutto Nyth Bran* would be the winner, but with a split decision. It was also recognised during the Eisteddfod that the correct spelling should be *Guto Nyth Bran*. This is, almost certainly, the first modern appearance of the Guto Nythbran story; otherwise, why would there have been any confusion over his name. But who performed it? Could it have been a young Glanffrwd? We know that by the age of twenty-three he was the recognised authority on Guto Nythbran, and he also tells us that he started performing in Eisteddfodau when he was in his teens - "I remember being decorated with a ribbon in honour of my first eisteddfod award. The year may have been 1859 or 1860."

The inconsistency of spelling between old and more modern Welsh, and from Welsh to English, produces a significant number of difficulties; Nythbran can also be Nyth Bran, Nyth Brân or Nythbrân. Griffith can be Gruffydd, Llanwynno can be Llanwyno or Llanwonno, and St Gwynno can be St. Gwonno, St Gwono, St Gwynnog, or even St Wonno, and so on, so one can never be certain that word-searches have revealed all that one hopes for; but at present it seems that the earliest modern written record of Guto Nyth Bran and his athletic exploits is to be found in the words written by Glanffrwd and inscribed on Guto's headstone, erected in 1866, and in *Plwyf Llanwyno*, published in 1888, and also written by Glanffrwd. These seem to be the last written words by Glanffrwd about Guto Nythbran, however, for he died eighteen months later, at the age of 47.

In *Plwyf Llanwyno*, Glanffrwd describes in detail his sources -

The traditional stories about him are known all over the parish. I spoke to the old people whose fathers knew him and one in particular, David Rhys, LLwynperdid, whose father often ran with Guto and trained with him on Mount Gwyngul.

Elsewhere, he wrote of Dafydd Rhys and Dafydd from Ynyshir -

the two of them told the stories of Guto Nythbran that they remembered so well, for their fathers had run with him in the mountains; and through their mothers and

fathers their memories went back to the year 1737. They were old, thin men, who wore long great coats almost down to the floor, with large buttons as big as five-shilling pieces from neck to foot. The coats appeared to be very heavy, but David of Ynyshir boasted that he once beat a champion at the Waun Fair in a jumping competition, while still wearing it.

It sounds far-fetched that Glanffrwd could have known men whose fathers ran with Guto. If Glanffrwd collected these stories from them when he was 15 (in 1858), and if the old men were 85 at the time, they would have been born in 1773. If their fathers were ten years younger than Guto, their fathers would have been born in 1710 and so would have been 63 in 1773 when their two sons (the two Dafydd) were born - possible, but still far-fetched. There are so many possibilities for error; transcription errors, errors in understanding, printing errors, etc., that it is hard to know how to interpret this story of the two Dafydd. It would be easier to understand if the story was about the two Dafydd's *generation*, and their parent's *generation*, rather than their actual parents, or, alternatively, if they had remembered the stories from their *grandfathers* who had run with Guto. Nevertheless, this seems to be the primary source, and the closest we will ever get now to an eye-witness account of Guto Nythbran/Griffith Morgan and his athletic achievements.

*Plwyf Llanwynno* is a collection of notes, almost jottings, and they describe a time before the railways, and before the massive expansion of mining in the Valleys. This is a rural world, much of it remote and difficult to access; a world in which shepherds are important, and where fairs and country pursuits illuminate the annual rhythms of life. Sport is important, and Glanffrwd tells us about hunting, handball, wrestling, bando, football, boxing, jumping, cock-fighting, and horse-racing, as well as running. But it is not a book about sport; it is a book of reminiscences. Nostalgia is on every page, and a sense of loss, the loss of the old pre-industrialised life in Llanwynno, the importance of the countryside, its churches, and its rivers, and of the characters, the like of which will not be seen again.

When Glanffrwd reports on a scene or an incident, he seems to see what is in front of him, but also sees a second layer - what used to be there but was long gone, and the people whom he remembered, but who lay still and cold in the churchyard. But Glanffrwd writes as if the old world co-habits with the present. It is a strange, often eerie book, full of spirits, shadows, and regrets; and it is not at all surprising that Glanffrwd prefers to use Griffith Morgan's nickname, Guto Nythbran, rather than his birth name - it seems to add to the mystique. Glanffrwd saw and thought in legends, and tales, and seemed to revel in the real/unreal nature of the past, and so the portrait we get of Griffith Morgan is also one of mystery, legend and almost deliberate un-reality. What possible sense can one make of running for miles and getting home before the kettle boils? It tells us nothing; nothing about the size of the kettle, the volume or temperature of the water, or the size of the fire. I can imagine a huge witch's cauldron of a kettle filled to the brim with icy water in January that would take all day to boil over a small fire. But Glanffrwd's story is deliberately lacking these details; it helps to mythologise his subject.

Glanffrwd's stories about Guto Nythbran were immediately popular and remained so for a generation; stories appeared about him in Welsh-language newspapers regularly through the 1870s and 1880s. Most of the items repeat some part of Glanffrwd's work, but not all. In December 1871, *Seren Cymru* printed a story (in Welsh) by Marc Bach about Mary Edward who might, or might not have been Griffith Morgan's sister, and who died in 1775 at the age of 47. "She was faster than him along the length of the brook that ran under the house, which was around 400 yards long", the story went. But here, too, the sums don't seem to add up. If Mary Edward was 47 in 1775, she must have been born in 1728, and so would have been 28 years younger than her brother. Although, technically possible, it is on the outer edge of probability. It is also possible, of course, that she was a half-sister. Also, when Guto died at the age of 37, she would have been nine; is it possible that a nine year old girl could be faster than her in-form 37 year-old brother? If we go back a year, it becomes even more unlikely; could an eight-year old girl beat a 36 year-old man like Guto, and so on? Not if the stories told about him are true, unless, of course, he wasn't trying. After 400 yards, the story concludes with Guto saying, "Farewell, Mary, I'm going," so perhaps we can imagine the two of them setting out together one day, with Guto on his way to the hills to get his sheep, and with his little sister keeping up with him for the first 400 yards. But it is a measure of the interest in him that such stories circulated in the 1870s.

Even if Mary Edwards was not Guto's sister, the story reports that he did have one; and he also had a son. Almost by chance, I found a reference in *William Thomas' Diary* to the death of Guto Nythbran's son, also Griffith Morgan, in White Church [Whitchurch], Cardiff, on 12 October 1766, at the age of "about 30 years of age, from the fever". Guto had died on 6 September 1737, so "about 30 years" would take us to about 1736, say, 1735 to 1737. So, Guto had a baby son when he ran his last fateful race, and it is even possible that his wife was in the final stages of pregnancy when Guto died. That changed the story somewhat; despite the efforts of Glanffrwd to turn Guto into a mythical legend; at this point, Griffith Morgan became real to me, and the full horror of that day in 1737 struck home. It was like a morality play - at the very moment of his greatest victory, Guto Nythbran drops dead, winning money - but losing his life, and leaving a grieving wife and their young baby son, who shared his name.

Guto Nythbran continues to appear in Welsh-language newspapers throughout the 1890s and 1900s, by which time Glanffrwd and Meudwy Glan Elai had both died, and both were buried in the same churchyard at St Gwynno's as Guto Nythbran; Glanffrwd under a grand, very Victorian-looking, monument, much grander than Gutto's. St Gwynno's cemetery had now become a destination. In June 1915, a fifty-strong party of members of the Aberdare branch of *Cymrodorion*, gathered at the *Black Lion* crossing and then took a "G.W.R. motor" to Cwmaman; and then climbed upwards to St Gwynno's, at 1,108ft (338m) a tough climb that took twice as long as their secretary had estimated, and which required refreshments as soon as they got there. It was described as an isolated, picturesque and historic hamlet, but it was even smaller than that. This was in the first year of WWI and, so, two-thirds of the party were women. *Cymrodorion* was a society whose aims were the promotion of Welsh culture and history, which war seemed to threaten and simultaneously made more important to

preserve. The group went round the church and then gathered around Glanffrwd's monument, where the Rev. R. Williams, then thought to be the "greatest living authority" on Llanwynno and Guto Nythbran, told once again the stories of Guto's life, achievements and untimely death. In many ways, it seems a strange thing to do, with Guto's grave only a few yards away, but Glanffrwd's son, Mr. Erbin Thomas, was among the party, so it was probably as a mark of respect to the family that Guto's story was told whilst standing around Glanffrwd's grave and not Guto's. Erbin Thomas had published his Second Edition of his father's *Plwyf Llanwynno* just two years earlier. And there may have been another reason too, for the group were told that Glanffrwd's other son, Victor Thomas, had just been killed in action on the Western Front, shot in the neck, serving with the 1st Devonshire Regiment.

These were sombre times, but the group were said to be smiling when they had their photographs taken before beginning the journey homeward. I wonder where that photograph is now. Guto Nythbran was now a mainstream topic in the Cynon valley at least; in 1916 the Mountain Ash Education Committee discussed the possible introduction of Glanffrwd's *Plwyf Llanwynno* into the schools. Perhaps a few copies could be procured for members to peruse in order for them to decide whether it was a suitable reader for the local school children. Would it need censoring, asked one member? Absolutely not, came the reply from a commentator in the *Aberdare Leader*; it was drawn from life, and the stories of Guto Nythbran were particularly useful, he said - "there can be no possible objection to even a chapter on racing. The work is a most useful one for local children. Charity begins at home, and the teaching of history should begin with local history," but this was war-time and no decision seems to have been made.

The idea that Guto Nythbran's story was particularly suitable for children appeared nearly forty years later. On Wednesday 24 February 1954, the *BBC Radio for Schools* carried a programme at 11.00am (on the *Light Programme* - on 341m), FIRST STAGES IN WELSH, 6, GUTO NYTH BRAN. But apparently no-one told Bernard Baldwin about it, and by then the story of Guto Nythbran and his achievements had gone out of fashion, and were only retained in the Welsh-speaking part of the community.

Although Glanffrwd's stories about Guto Nythbran are, almost certainly, the source of those that Bernard Baldwin later re-collected, they are not *exactly* the same; so, until Siân o'r Siop's diaries are found hidden up a disused chimney piece in Troed-rhiw-y-Cymer, we have to consider Glanffrwd's account the authoritative one; the one against which we have to judge later ones that have no known other provenance. For although Glanffrwd's account is sometimes inconsistent, often vague, and frustratingly incomplete, we need to remember that he was writing for a particular audience, and that audience included those who also knew the two Daffyds, and who had the opportunity to check Glanffrwd's stories with others, and maybe even with the two Daffyds. There was plenty of time to do that; there were twenty-two years between the erection of Guto Nyth Bran's headstone and the writing of his story, time enough for various versions of the story to be challenged, agreed and eventually to be written down.

The discrepancies start with Siân o'r Siop; in Bernard's version, she is Guto's sweetheart, but it doesn't seem right to call it "Bernard's version" because she was described as Guto's "sweetheart" as early as 1903. It is understandable that a story-teller might want to introduce some romantic interest into the story but Glanffrwd simply calls her Guto's "best female friend". We know now that Guto was a father with young children, so she is unlikely to be his "sweetheart". Her value to Guto seems to have been in the fact that she ran a shop, and so was used to handling money, and she was his backer, - "she risked a lot of money on his feet," wrote Glanffrwd, and made money for them both with astutely placed bets. Her shop (where she also lived) was in two thatched houses at Troed-rhiw-y-cymer, and a contributor to *The Aberdare Leader* (20 December 1913) described her as "an old woman". She probably was, for Glanffrwd wrote "that many rich gentlemen in the country today are some of her descendants or have derived their wealth through her." She made a small fortune from a 4-Mile race between Guto and an English army captain from Carmarthen, stationed with his troops at Hirwaun; in fact, Glanffrwd wrote that she "arranged" it. They ran for a purse of £500, which would have a purchasing power of £71,660 today, but a much larger value when considered as labour earnings (£926,000), and vastly more if we consider its equivalent economic power today (£10,430,000). However we calculate it, it was an enormous sum of money.

The match with Prince was arranged at Caerphilly, and "hundreds of pounds" were wagered on it. Siân o'r Siop, who was by then a rich woman, wagered "an apron full of sovereigns," and many "wealthy men of the parish" became rich by Guto's victory; but in gaining their money they lost their hero - it is little wonder that the story was passed on from generation to generation. It is a sort of warning about what we should value. A kind of athletic morality play, in which Guto Nythbran became the tragic hero, and a true legend, whose life and story are still remembered 280 years later. The story might not have been lost without Bernard Baldwin, but it would certainly have been forgotten, and without him it would not be celebrated in his home town the way it is now.

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