

TRANSLATION

*Presentation of the Cymmrodorion Medal to Professor R. Geraint Gruffydd
National Library of Wales, 15 February 2014*

*Address by Professor Prys Morgan
President, Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*

Thank you for the warm welcome to the National Library and for the delicious tea. It is a pleasure to have a medal ceremony in Wales: in the last few years, Archbishop Rowan Williams was honoured in his palace at Lambeth, the historian Lord Morgan of Aberdyfi in the House of Lords, and Sir Martin Evans, the Nobel prize winner, in the Royal Society, all in London. But this afternoon we are on home ground, 'praising famous men' in the words of Ecclesiasticus – outside the four walls of the chapel one is allowed to take the subject of one's sermon from the Apocrypha.

One of the words for 'famous' in Welsh during the medieval period, on which Geraint Gruffydd is such an authority, was *dathyl*, as in Caer Dathyl. From this word we get *dathlu*, 'to celebrate', a word minted by one of the most industrious members of the Cymmrodorion, William Owen Pughe, who spent his childhood at Egryn in Ardudwy, a stone's throw from the birthplace of Geraint Gruffydd. Pughe received one of the medals of the Cymmrodorion, and he in turn went on behalf of the Cymmrodorion all the way to Caerwys to give a medal to the historian Angharad Llwyd.

The Cymmrodorion first awarded medals as eisteddfod prizes during the later eighteenth century, but when the Society was reborn in 1820 it became part and parcel of the Society's work to award medals to celebrate the exploits of our national heroes. The Society of course has three ways to celebrate: one is to award medals, the second is to put up monuments like the one to Dafydd ap Gwilym at Strata Florida, and the third is by recounting their deeds in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, not unlike the British *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *DNB*.

At the last medal ceremony in September, we were awarding a medal to Sir Martin Evans FRS, and in private conversation afterwards Sir John Meurig Thomas told me that he had years ago sat on a committee advising the Government on honours, and he and other scientists were pressing for honours for people who had worked out the biological secrets of DNA. After a lot of arguing about DNA, the historian Robert Blake from Oxford intervened with some surprise, 'Surely you mean *DNB*, not DNA?'

I mentioned just now that the Cymmrodorion gave medals regularly from 1820 onwards and indeed I am wearing one of the earliest, designed by John Flaxman who designed medals for George IV. This one was awarded in 1821 to the bard and churchman Ieuan Glan Geirionydd, and on it one can see the Society's motto, *Cared doeth yr encilion* ('Let the wise take care of the past'). This medal crossed to America and resurfaced in Chicago recently. It was spotted by one of the well-wishers of the Society, Mr Roger Pope, who kindly donated it to the Society. It is

now worn by the President as a badge of office.

In 1832, a medal was awarded to the judge Arthur James Johnes, Garthmyl, for his essay, *On Causes of Dissent in Wales* (London, 1870), an influential book in its day; in 1826 a medal was awarded to Samuel Roberts of Llanbryn-mair, and another in 1828 to the young Gwilym Hiraethog for an essay on ‘Cantre’r Gwaelod’, the Lowland Hundred. The letter sent from the Society’s secretary to congratulate Samuel Roberts was always treasured by the family in Llanbryn-mair and it is curious that many years later, when the Society had gone to sleep and needed to be reawakened, it was this very letter which inspired Samuel Roberts’s nephew, John Griffith ‘Y Gohebydd’, to suggest to Sir Hugh Owen in 1873 that the Cymmrodorion needed to be re-established. Griffith’s nickname was *Pobman*, ‘Everywhere’, a nickname which would have been just as appropriate for Sir Hugh Owen. After the Society had come back into existence, by 1882 medals were once again awarded for distinguished service to Wales and the first of these went to Gwilym Hiraethog who had won his youthful prize medal in 1828.

I have mentioned the apostolic succession of medal-winners from Ieuan Glan Geirionydd and Gwilym Hiraethog up to today’s medallist, but there are other successions. Since the Society has been so instrumental in founding national institutions, it is no surprise that medals have been awarded to the founders of the National Library such as Sir John Williams and Sir Herbert Lewis, and indeed to National Librarians such as Sir John Ballinger, Sir Thomas Parry, and Dr Brynley Roberts. In addition, there is a succession of medallists from the fields of Welsh and Welsh history, such as Sir John Rhys, Sir John Morris-Jones, Sir Ifor Williams, Sir Thomas Parry-Williams, John Gwilym Jones, Sir John Edward Lloyd, and Sir Glanmor Williams. Most appropriate of all perhaps to mention in the same breath as Geraint Gruffydd, because of their close friendship, is the name of Saunders Lewis.

The antique medal on its ribbon which I am wearing today carries our motto, *Cared doeth yr encilion* (‘Let the wise take care of the past’). The modern series of medals are treasures to be cherished rather than objects to be worn, and so they are unribboned – I suppose that is *anysnodenedig* in Welsh, a word I offer freely to the new edition of the *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (‘University of Wales Dictionary’), the great work which Geraint has played such an important part in developing. I should perhaps explain that there is more than one meaning for *encilion*, ‘refuges or relics of the past’, in the motto: it can refer to the fact that we, the Cymmrodorion, are the ‘earliest aborigines’ of the Island of Britain, forced by fate to flee to the mountain fastnesses (the *encilion*) of the west. But it also refers to everything that rolls back from the present, our history and ancient language and everything valuable from the past – these are *encilion* too.

The two meanings I have mentioned, and a host of other meanings, would be applicable to Geraint Gruffydd, as you can now hear from Professor Dafydd Johnston.