



## The family background of Owain Glyndŵr, Unit 1.2.1 Owain Glyndŵr c. 1354-c.1416

## Wales in the fourteenth century

- Population: Around 200,000
- Largest town: Cardiff (2,200 inhabitants)
- Wales was predominantly rural – only 10% of the population lived in towns
- Two main classes: free and unfree
- The free (later known as the gentry) were landowners
- The unfree (or villeins) worked the land and paid for it through services and providing food for the free
- Bards were an important part of Welsh culture – they were paid by landowners
- Peace was maintained through the Laws of Hywel Dda

## Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd

Also known as Gruffudd Fychan II, Owain Glyndŵr's father had a claim to be Prince of Powys Fadog. His family once held all the land in Powys. He was Lord of Glyndyfrdwy and Lord of Cynllaith Owain, which meant he held lands (from the King of England) on both sides of the Berwyn Mountains. His main residence was the family home at Sycharth, Llansilin, but he also owned a hunting lodge in Carrog.

## Elen ferch Thomas ap Llewelyn

Owain Glyndŵr's mother was also from a prestigious family, the royal family of Deheubarth. Elen could trace her family history as far back as the legendary Welsh heroes Lord Rhys and Rhys ap Tewdwr. She had four other children, meaning Owain had two brothers – Tudur and Madog – and two sisters – Morfydd and Lowri.

## Early life: timeline

c. 1354	Owain Glyndŵr is born
c. 1369	Death of Gruffudd, Owain's father
c. 1375	Moves to London
c. 1382	Returns to Sycharth
c. 1383	Marriage of Owain and Margaret Hanmer

## The death of his father

Owain's father died when he was around 14 years old. This meant he assumed responsibility for the lands much earlier than expected. He spent a long time with the family of Sir David Hanmer, possibly as a foster child.

## The Inns of Court in London

Probably thanks to Sir David, Owain spent seven years in London. He gained vast knowledge of the law, as well as learning how to socialise with other major landowners.

## Marriage to Margaret Hanmer

Margaret and Owain were well-acquainted, as he had spent years with the Hanmer family in Maelor Saesneg following the death of his father. The marriage took place around 1383, and they had six sons – Gruffudd, Madog, Maredudd, Thomas, John and Dafydd – and three daughters – Catrin, Alys and Janet. Margaret is praised by the poet Iolo Goch, suggesting she was a role model as both a woman and a wife. At the time, this would have meant she was seen as loyal, dutiful and an excellent wife and mother.

## Living as Lord of Sycharth

Owain Glyndŵr's income would have been £200, which is around £209,000 in today's money. He was one of the wealthiest landowners in Wales. Sycharth was one of the finest homes in Wales, a motte-and-bailey complex. The house itself measured 35 feet by 18 feet and had a slated roof. It had some stained glass windows, a chimney and a wine cellar – all rare features at the time. Nearby, there was a church, stables for the horses, a pigeon house, a fish pond, a heronry, rabbit warrens, a deer park, orchards, hayfields and plenty of green meadows, meaning the household lived very comfortably indeed. Owain and Margaret were praised as generous hosts and welcomed many bards and poets to their home.



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