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Chapter V
**Witchcraft as Words :
Slander and Defamation Case Studies.**

For Richard F. Suggett.¹

The majority of witchcraft cases which came before the courts in early modern Wales were witchcraft as words cases: cases in which a woman took another person to court for having said, before witnesses, that the woman was a witch. In the Courts of Great Sessions such cases were termed "slander". Some witchcraft as words cases were located in quarter sessions files but it was the Courts of Great Sessions which heard most of these cases. In the ecclesiastical courts in early modern Wales, witchcraft as words was termed "defamation", although the two should not be confused or approached, from an analytical perspective, in the same way. Whilst the subject matter of the cases appears to be similar, the two types of court treated the case lodged before them in a very different manner as the motives of the participants presenting the case in the court of their choice were not similar. Before 1500, the secular courts did not use the term "defamation" and the temporal courts did not use the term "slander". Cases lodged in the secular courts were for a specific sum of money, the financial compensation which the slandered person was seeking from the slanderer. In the ecclesiastical courts, the defamed was seeking an acknowledgement of the defamation from the defamer and was lodging the case to seek punishment of whatever spiritual nature the court deemed sufficient punishment for the defamer. Ecclesiastical courts could not punish the defamer by setting an amount of financial compensation.²

The procedure in a slander case began with a declaration which opened the pleading in a

1 This chapter acknowledges the unpublished work of Richard F. Suggett. I would like to thank Richard for his permission to access this work in 1994, for his encouragement and comments concerning slander and defamation in early modern Wales and for his profound generosity in sharing his intellectual property. His work entitled "An Analysis and Calendar of Early Modern Welsh Defamation Suits." in two volumes was the result of a Social Science Research Council (E.S.R.C.) project (HR 1679) and copies of the Final Reports were lodged with The Department of Manuscripts, National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth and The Department of Dialects, Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, Cardiff. The NLW catalogue details are: NLW FACS 721. This work was available from the Department of Manuscripts with written permission from the author in 1994 but had been withdrawn from access by Richard Suggett in 1998.

2 Witchcraft as words cases for early modern Wales are located in NLW, Great Sessions 13; NLW, Great Sessions P ; and NLW, Great Sessions 28, all of which are the extant records of the prothonotary papers. Prothonotary papers relate to civil cases and all pre-1660 witchcraft as words cases are located in Great Sessions 13. Post-1660 cases were located in Great Sessions P although those cases relating to Carmarthen were dispersed into Great Sessions p until 1732, and thereafter were located in Great Sessions 28 . (See Glyn Parry , *A Guide to the Records of Great Sessions in Wales*, The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1995, Preface, p. xcvi.) Richard Suggett's work is an Index of Welsh Defamation Suits and is one of the few indexing works for the Courts of Great Sessions. Glyn Parry has stated that the records are underutilised by historians and one of the reasons, I would suggest, is because little indexing work has been done. This means that the researcher must wade through every Courts of Great Sessions record in order to find cases related to his/her research area. See Glyn Parry ,op. cit., p. i.

civil action and the plaintiff's attorney handed the complaint over at the prothonotary's office where it was filed. This was important because the declaration is the only record of the substance of those actions which were not enrolled in the plea rolls and "declarations and original writs are the only record of initial pleadings, irrespective of whether issue had been reached or not, in those instances where the plea rolls are missing."³

Defamation cases could be heard in the secular court as well as the ecclesiastical court from 1500 onwards and the jurisdiction of the court was determined by the nature of the words used, for example, thief was a secular matter, whore was a spiritual matter but combinations of the two, according to the law, had to be heard in the temporal courts.⁴ The term "witch" must have been regarded as a secular matter as it appears frequently on its own in the slander cases located in the prothonotary files. Cases which cited the term "witch" in combination with "whore," or words with similar implications, were equally common. However, if the defamation was considered to be of such a nature as to cause a breach of the peace, the case had to go to the temporal courts. Most importantly, "Aggrieved parties sued for damages in the temporal courts after being slandered; spiritual courts were forbidden to award cash damages."⁵

A writ of prohibition could remove the cases of defamation initiated in the diocesan court to the secular courts as the court was presented with a document called a suggestion in which information, not on oath, was provided which gave the grounds on which a writ of prohibition should be issued. Judges, after reading the suggestion as well as the occasional affidavit, could order that a prohibition to stay proceedings should be issued against the chancellor of the diocesan or chancery court or against the proctor who was prosecuting the case.⁶ Documents relating to the defamation cases which were removed by writs of prohibition become very important in cases where the ecclesiastical court records no longer survive. Such ecclesiastical court records are no longer extant for Bangor until after 1734 and those for St. Asaph are not extant prior to 1826.⁷

Prothonotary papers for the Brecon circuit "also include papers relating to criminal actions until 1700. These comprise, in the main, calendars of prisoners noting the charge, plea and verdict, but not the sentence." Calendars for a third of the Brecon pre-1660 files are extant, two-thirds for pre-1660 Radnor but only six pre-1660 prothonotary files are

³ *ibid.*, p. xcvi.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. c.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. c.

⁶ See Brian P. Levack *The Civil Lawyers of England 1603-1641 A Political Study*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 73-81. for the use of prohibitions in the Westminster courts, in particular, the full scale attack initiated by the judges of common law against the jurisdictions of the inferior courts in the 1590s. Levack goes on to examine the effects this process had on the archiepiscopal and diocesan ecclesiastical courts as well as the Admiralty Court, the Courts of Chancery, Requests, and Delegates, the High Commission and the Council of the North.

⁷ Glyn Parry, *op. cit.*, p. c- ci.

extant for Glamorgan.⁸ Ascertaining the witchcraft situation for this circuit is, therefore, fraught with difficulty. English replaced Latin as the language of the court in 1732 although Parry⁹ mentions only the Carmarthen circuit in this statement. NLW, Great Sessions 28 contain what is known as the Black Books or "The Docket of the Gaol" but this is only for the Brecon circuit. However, the 1726-1830 extant records are outside the timeframe of the early modern period ¹⁰ and do not contain any cases of witchcraft as words.

The judicial system implemented with the Acts of Union incorporated methods of dealing with cases of slander and defamation, but such methods were also relatively new in this period of English legal history. Prior to the early modern period, two types of courts had had the responsibility for slander cases in the English system: the feudal courts had awarded compensation and apologies for defamation of character whilst the ecclesiastical courts had ordered public apologies and the payment of costs. The system had become increasingly unworkable as the feudal courts had decayed by 1500 and the Church courts were no longer able to award damages, a circumstance which necessitated a solution.¹¹

Action was necessary because, even though slander was in oral rather than in written form, the plaintiff both needed and deserved a remedy because of the material damage accrued. A solution was provided through the mechanism which became known as the Action on the Case: "Slander of a man's professional reputation was soon recognised as actionable without proof of damage" but, "Slander actionable on proof of special damage originated in imputations of immoral, as opposed to criminal conduct."¹² The divergence arose because, if an individual suffered material loss caused by a slander, the Action on the Case was the only way to recover damages and the ecclesiastical courts were unable to use Action on the Case.¹³ Throughout the processes of law, the nature of slander as an offence remained constant, "A defamation had to be a public utterance, and so plaintiffs now could call witnesses who had heard the words spoken publicly ... Plaintiffs who chose to prosecute with witnesses were now subject to pay court expenses if their suits failed..."¹⁴ The early modern Welsh witchcraft as words cases fall into this category: slander before witnesses led to a court case which sought financial recompense for the damage to individual reputation.

Judicial commonality in slander and defamation cases between England and Wales did

⁸ ibid., p. cii.

⁹ ibid., p. ciii.

¹⁰ ibid., p. cxxix - cxxx.

¹¹ A.K.R. Kiralfy, *The English Legal System*, 6th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1978, p. 47.

¹² ibid., p. 48.

¹³ ibid., p. 49.

¹⁴ Richard M. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*, Speculum Anniversary Monographs, No. 7, (Editors Robert Brentano et.al.) The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981, p. 71.

not, however, necessarily mean that both countries dealt with witchcraft as words in a common legal way. By the sixteenth century English church courts were reluctant to deal with such issues as scolding and witchcraft, perhaps due to the pressure exerted upon those courts by the royal courts.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the church courts were aware that the community needed a resolution as "somebody who was alleged to have defamed her neighbours or sown discord amongst them was an unpopular figure whose prosecution was readily supported by fellow parishioners, and was amongst those offenders more likely to be forced to clear their names or to do penance."¹⁶ In England, the witchcraft as words cases tended to move into the quarter sessions and assize courts due to the decline of ecclesiastical court power. The move was reinforced when witchcraft per se became a criminal offence, particularly after the Witchcraft Act of James I which emphasised the pact with the devil rather than *maleficia* which made witchcraft a felony punishable by death.¹⁷ The changed legal perception of the nature of witchcraft makes the move to the criminal courts the only option because witchcraft as a criminal act required the lodgement of such cases before the secular courts.

This thesis contends that witchcraft as words cases in early modern Wales had a specific motive behind the manner in which such cases were lodged. Evidence suggests that such cases were lodged, by choice, in the Courts of Great Sessions. Witchcraft as words cases in Wales were tried in the secular courts as slander only, meaning that no attempt was made by judges, jury or any other participants to discover if the woman who had been called a witch actually engaged in any activities which were associated with witchcraft.

Evidence also suggests that some slander cases had originally begun in the church courts. Following Courts of Great Sessions procedure however, a writ of prohibition moved the case of defamation in the diocesan court to the secular court. In other words, a defamation case was transmuted into a slander case in the secular courts, allowing for financial damages to be awarded.

The original case against Gwen verch Ellis¹⁸ had begun when she had appeared before the Bishop of St. Asaph initially on 12th June in 1594 but her witchcraft as *malefice* case was heard in the Courts of Great Sessions for Denbigh. At the St. Asaph hearing on 10th July ,1594 she was asked about the picture of Christ and the bell without the clapper but she was not asked about the fly, described by some witnesses in the *malefice* case, as Gwen verch Ellis' devil. In other words, the emphasis was not on her

¹⁵ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and The People During the English Revolution 1520-1570*, Oxford Historical Monographs, (General editors Barbara Harvey et.al.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979, p.39.

¹⁶ ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷ Acts: 1 James I, c.12.

¹⁸ NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/10-15 NLW Denbigh Gaol Files (1594) Great Sessions for Denbigh 36 Elizabeth.

activities but on her possessions, and perhaps the examiners were trying to establish if Gwen was a Roman Catholic, possibly a recusant,¹⁹ but they did not appear to place much credence on the fly/devil link. The evidence gathered in the St. Asaph hearing was submitted in the Courts of Great Sessions and the transcripts indicate that Gwen may have been before the church court for the use of charms and charming to cure people and animals.²⁰ Gwen was tried under the 1562 Witchcraft Act of Elizabeth which emphasised that *maleficia* was punishable, if proved, by one year's imprisonment.²¹

Another case which may have been transmuted from a defamation to a slander case was from Caernarvon in 1754. Heard in the Courts of Great Sessions, the transcripts also contained evidence that the woman was appearing or had appeared in the Spiritual Courts at Bangor. In 1754, at the sessions held at Carnarvon (sic) on 5 September 28 George II, William Hughes of Carnarvon, tailor, and his wife Catherine brought a case against William Lloyd, gentleman and his wife Alice.²² More detail concerning the actual slander and the event was attached to this court record.

(Prohibition)

Suggestion: William and Catherine Hughes informed the court, praying a writ of prohibition, that the Welsh words following are words of heat and passion only, and not so grievous as to be prosecuted in any court Christian; nevertheless Catherine has been cited to appear in the Spiritual Court of Bangor to answer a certain libel for defaming Alice in the twelve months preceding the commencement of the cause by saying;

Yr ydiw chwi wedi meddwi."

in English " You are Drunk."

And also for calling Alice " a witch."

19 The extent of Welsh adherence to Catholic practices was widespread after the 1559 religious settlement. The Elizabethan government became so concerned about this issue that it ordered a survey of recusants, diocese by diocese, which began in 1577. Recusancy numbers were high and the largest proportion of Catholics was located in Wales which, among other contributory factors, resulted in new statutes in 1585 which further increased the fines for recusants. See: Gareth Jones, *The Gentry and the Elizabethan State*, Christopher Davies, Swansea, 1977, p. 84-85. William Raleigh Trimble, *The Catholic Laity Under Elizabethan England 1558-1603*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1964, pp. 20,81. J. Gwynfor Jones, *Wales and the Tudor State: Government, Religious Change and the Social Order 1543-1603*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1989, p. 79. State Papers, Domestic, 12/118/11.2 October 25, 1577. State Papers, Domestic, 12/118/10 November 4, 1577. Emyr Gwynne Jones "Catholic Recusancy in the Counties of Denbigh, Flint and Montgomery, 1581-1625.", *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1945, p. 114 - 133.

20 Unfortunately, the original church court documents do not survive, making it impossible to ascertain who brought Gwen before the court and on what original charge. The only documentation pertaining to this case is NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/10-15 NLW Denbigh Gaol Files (1594) Great Sessions for Denbigh 36 Elizabeth.

21 Acts : 5 Eliz., c.16 (1562).

22 NLW, Great Sessions P.1616 Great Sessions for Caernarvon (1754) Sessions for Caernarvon 5 September 28 George II.

Libel: copy filed

The defamers, now slanderers, were lodging a writ of prohibition, not the defamed or slandered, perhaps to stop Alice and William Lloyd claiming damages for libel. The case may, perhaps, have been a counter claim against a case which Alice and William Lloyd had lodged or were going to lodge for financial recompense for the slander. Whatever the situation, no further information concerning either party was located in the Courts of Great Sessions records.²³

However, in the case of Agnes verch Maddock, who lodged four separate slander cases against four different people, two in 1604²⁴ and two in 1610²⁵ in the Denbigh Courts of Great Sessions, it is difficult not to suppose that the Welsh people had a different approach to lodgement of witchcraft as words cases from that of England. The evidence presented against Agnes in the slander cases probably would have proved that she was a witch but no attempt was made to establish the fact and the cases did not become witchcraft as *malefice* cases. In other words, the Welsh courts tried only the case which was presented to them and did not deviate from that case typology. Witchcraft as words cases were all potential witchcraft as *malefice* cases, particularly after the 1604 Witchcraft Act of James I. However, the Welsh slander cases, some of which contain evidence which made intentional and premeditated harm very probable, did not evolve into witchcraft as *malefice* cases despite the fact that these were lodged in the secular, criminal courts.

Added to this, the witchcraft as words cases do not appear to have been lodged in the ecclesiastical courts in any great number prior to the 1750s and may have bypassed the ecclesiastical courts for the 1540-1700s period. Although it cannot be assumed that slander cases in Wales did not begin in the ecclesiastical courts, it was more than a probability that such cases did not. The majority of ecclesiastical records for Wales prior to the 1700s do not survive and those which are extant, yielded few cases. The extant records examined for defamation cases which concerned or mentioned witchcraft in the ecclesiastical courts for Wales include those for Bangor 1742-1792, Llandaff 1710-1792, St. Davids 1674-1838, Archdeaconry of Brecon 1662-1702, the Court of Arches (appeals) 1670-1798,²⁶ the Peculiar of Hawarden Consistory Court, and St. Asaph.

While the lack of records could be regarded as restrictive, church courts were not the most likely place to locate witchcraft as words cases for early modern Wales. Case lodgement was dependent upon the motives of those who lodged the cases and

²³ Research has also failed to find any reference to this case in the surviving cause papers for Bangor which are extant from 1742-1792.

²⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 13/6, Great Sessions for Denbigh, 1604.

²⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 13/6, Great Sessions for Denbigh, 1610.

²⁶ See Richard F. Suggett, *An Analysis and Calendar of Early Modern Welsh Defamation Suits*, op. cit. Vol. II.

these were not related to rectification of a spiritual wrong. Cases were lodged in the Courts of Great Sessions because these were the courts where the Welsh people believed they would achieve justice. The justice they wanted in slander cases was not dependent upon the witchcraft aspect of the case as the emphasis was entirely different: the case lodgers wanted justice for the restitution of their honour, social place and standing. Compensatory payment for the verbal slander was the motive for the lodgement of the cases in the Courts of Great Sessions. Without financial recompense for the slander, the slandered individual could not be seen by her community to have made an attempt to re-instate her perceived social place. Financial recompense was not available in the ecclesiastical courts, only in the secular courts. The usual pattern of events outside Wales was lodgement first in one court (ecclesiastical) then later the cases were moved to another court (secular) because witchcraft in any form was regarded as a criminal act in the eyes of the law. Such a situation did not occur in Wales.²⁷

The evidence will show that the reasons why Welsh women lodged witchcraft as words cases in the criminal Courts of Great Sessions can be directly related to the customary laws of the Welsh people, specifically, the Law of Women. The important facts about lodgement in these cases are that all concerned women and that the woman who had been slandered as a witch brought the case against those who had slandered her.

The variation between English and Welsh responses to the slander of witchcraft was not based on any difference in either the perception or definition of slander as both countries perceived that the slander of witchcraft "injured people in their temporal reputations and was essentially an action for compensation."²⁸ The divergent response centred on the difference between the English and the Welsh perception of the nature of witchcraft. While the English regarded witchcraft as a criminal act, the Welsh evidence indicates that they regarded the slander of a woman for witchcraft as a purely social and legal issue. Church courts were therefore of little use to them as a slander was not a spiritual issue and, more importantly, ecclesiastical courts could not award damages. Without financial recompense, restitution of personal honour was unattainable. Financial recompense for damage to an individual's reputation was the key issue/motive which necessitated the lodgement of witchcraft as words cases in the Courts of Great Sessions.

²⁷ Evidence for this can be found in cases for Durham, Devon and Cornwall. For an in depth view of the situation elsewhere please see: Helena Kennedy, *Eve Was Framed: Women and British Justice*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1992, p. 25. Peter Rushton, "Women, Witchcraft and Slander in Early Modern England: Cases from the Church Courts at Durham, 1560-1675." *Northern History*, 18, 1982, p.116-132. Janet Thompson, *Wives, Widows, Witches and Bitches Women in Seventeenth Century Devon*, Peter Lang, New York, 1993, American University Studies Series IX History, Vol. 106, p. 81-101. Martin Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage, 1570-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 2. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Sixth Edition, 1992, p. 59.

²⁸ R. Suggett, "Slander in Early-Modern Wales." *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol. XXXIX, 1992, p.120. I stress that Richard Suggett is talking about slander generally, not witchcraft only and that the emphasis is mine.

The slander issue was not connected to content, that is being a witch. Name calling, being called a witch before witnesses in a public place, slandered the individual in terms of her place within the community. The cases were not lodged with the intention of proving or disproving the truth of the subject matter of the slander, whether the person was or was not a witch. The cases were lodged because, what needed to be formally stated, was the recognition that a slander had occurred and that the individual wanted recompense for the loss of reputation and social place.²⁹ If court action was not taken to redeem the slandered person's honour, the individual would suffer more in the eyes of the community, members of which would consider her inaction as negligence.³⁰ Making the effort may be the key reason why the case, once lodged, often had no recorded outcome: the slandered person had been seen to make an effort to redeem her honour by her community because she lodged a case, the outcome of which was not so vital. It was lodgement which was important.

The witchcraft as words cases indicate that Welsh people in the early modern period viewed their honour, their social place, as far more important than whether an individual was or was not a witch. Being called a witch in a public place and before witnesses was, therefore, far from being acceptable. Retraction of the insult/slander and financial recompense were the objects of the court case; re-instatement and maintenance of social place, the motive for the court case. Compensation for reputation was the central aspect of all the witchcraft as words cases and it was of immeasurable importance when the slander was for being a witch or for practising witchcraft.

The Welsh cases were not being heard in the relative safety of the ecclesiastical courts, the cases were heard and remained in the highest and most public court available within Wales before recourse was had to the Council of the Marches or the Star Chamber in London. The situation was unusual: Welsh slander cases were being lodged in the criminal courts where the slandered individual was at risk of being tried for witchcraft as *malefice*, particularly after 1604, because the case concerned witchcraft and witchcraft practices were a felony. Even when witchcraft as *malefice* cases were being tried in the same courts and in the same county, the witchcraft as words case remained a slander case and the two types of witchcraft cases proceeded in the courts alongside one another but the original nature of the cases remained intact. Witchcraft as words cases remained as slander cases and witchcraft as *malefice* cases were tried only as witchcraft as *malefice* cases. Only in witchcraft as *malefice* cases did proof of witching activities

²⁹ See Chapter III The Customary *Law of Women*: Social Place and Cultural Status.

³⁰ A logic emphasised in much the same way as the Laws of Women concerning wayward husbands and the communal view of a woman's actions whose husband had been wayward on more than three occasions: in the eyes of the community, if the woman stayed with her husband, her loss of status was enormous as she was seen as accepting the insult rather than dealing with the insult and lost social standing as a result of her decision. The community expected the woman to assert her rights and leave her husband as she had the legally recognised financial ability to survive on her own. The depth of this view was underlined by the Law of Women tractate which stated that a woman had a right to kill her husband's mistress if he brought her into the home. She could do so without punishment as the law stated that she had the right to behave in such a way if she was so provoked.

have to be provided by the woman's accusers in order to establish whether she was or was not a witch. The slandered individual in Wales never had to prove the veracity of the witchcraft slander against her, she only had to prove that a slander had occurred.³¹

The precepts of the Law of Women dictated the lodgement of cases in the post-1543 secular courts because the lodgement was accompanied by a belief, perhaps a certainty, that the woman slandered as a witch was quite secure in the lodgement of her case. All the parties involved understood that it was her honour which she was attempting to redeem. The discussion now rests on the evidence which existed within the witchcraft as words cases which supports the argument of the thesis.

English and Welsh procedure for slander cases differed: people in England were brought to assize courts on charges of practising witchcraft and others brought people before the ecclesiastical courts for having slandered them as a witch. In Wales, both types of cases were brought before the Courts of Great Sessions. An important aspect of witchcraft in early modern Wales was understanding why and how these witchcraft as words cases remained as slander cases when the cases were lodged in the Great Sessions. Despite the evidence provided in some witness and slandered persons' statements, witchcraft as words cases rarely became criminal witchcraft as *malefice* cases.³²

Gwen verch Ellis'³³ case appears to be the only Welsh witchcraft case which, having begun in the ecclesiastical courts was removed through the legal format of a suggestion in which information generated a writ of prohibition, thus moving the case from the church court to the Courts of Great Sessions. This led to a presentment for the crime of witchcraft in the county of Denbigh. The situation in Anglesey regarding the case of Maud verch Hugh ap Hugh,³⁴ a slander case lodged by Maud seeking 100 pounds damages, cannot be substantiated one way or the other as questions remain regarding what eventually happened in this case. It is probable that Maud's case became a witchcraft as *malefice* case because she was tried in the 1652-1655 period before the court at Beaumaris in Anglesey when Margaret verch Richard³⁵ was definitely executed for *malefice* witchcraft. Margaret's case transcripts showed that her case was very unusual as only the statement of execution exists, no witness statements and no words from Margaret who put herself on the mercy of the court for the death of Gwen Meredith,

³¹ The counties of Flint and Pembroke were prime examples of this occurrence.

³² For example, the case of Maud verch Hugh ap Hugh (NLW, Great Sessions 16/5/ Great Sessions for Anglesey (1652) Deposition No.5 Anglesey Plea Rolls, Roll 8).

³³ NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/10-15 NLW Denbigh Gaol Files (1594) Great Sessions for Denbigh 36 Elizabeth.

³⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 16/5/ Great Sessions for Anglesey (1652) Deposition No.5 Anglesey Plea Rolls, Roll 8.

³⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 16/7 Great Sessions for Anglesey (1655) Margaret verch Richard of Beaumaris 20th August 1655 at Beaumaris. Executed.

supposedly as a result of Margaret's *malefice* witchcraft practices.³⁶

The possibility of transmutation of defamation cases to slander cases by removing the cases from the church to the secular courts aside, lodgement of a slander case in the Courts of Great Sessions may prove to be a significant aspect of early modern Welsh witchcraft. If the slandered woman felt secure enough to lodge a witchcraft as words case because she knew it would not evolve into a witchcraft as *malefice* case, establishing why she felt such security becomes important.

Cases for slander in Wales were procedural: an indictment was lodged at the Quarter Sessions, the information was lodged with the Council of the Marches whilst the Courts of Great Sessions and the inferior courts recorded the actions on the case for damages.³⁷ Slander was defined as a false report which was uttered maliciously with the intention of causing injury to personal reputations and, as the slander had the potential to cause a breach of the peace, it was an indictable offence. As an indictable offence, the case would normally proceed to the quarter sessions courts but these courts could only hear cases for compensation below 40 shillings. As most Welsh cases were lodged with considerable sums requested, an important consequence of this was that the cases had to come under the jurisdiction of the Courts of Great Sessions rather than the local courts.³⁸ The person lodging the case determined how much compensation to ask for and most witchcraft as words cases were lodged with considerable sums requested, anything from a few pounds up to one thousand pounds. Document evidence shows that almost all the slander claims by those who were being called a witch were for very large sums, which means that the lodger of the case knowingly asked for an amount which would automatically move the case from the quarter sessions to the Courts of Great Sessions. Lodging a witchcraft as words case in the Courts of Great Sessions after the 1604 Witchcraft Act seemed, therefore, to compound the risk of the undertaking as the court in which the case would be heard was a criminal court and, as such, was required to try all cases according to English law after the Acts of Union, 1536-43.

Most early modern Welsh counties had cases lodged for the slander of being called a witch and every case contained a specific statement in the testimony that a particular person was called a witch before witnesses and in a public place. These witchcraft as words cases followed the procedure which entitled an individual to claim financial compensation for damage done to a reputation, a situation in pre-1536 Wales which automatically enabled a litigation case against the slanderer. Not only was litigation enabled, it was also expected. The premise continued post 1536-1543, the only

³⁶ The case is discussed in full in Chapter IX Witchcraft as *Malefice*...

³⁷ Richrd F. Suggett, *An Analysis and Calender of Early Modern Welsh Defamation Suits*, Vol I, Dept of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Penglais, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, (Unpublished) and held on Restricted Access at NLW in 1994 (NLW Facs 721), p. ii.

³⁸ Owen M. Edwards, *The Story of the Nations*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1901, p. 333 and Hugh Thomas, *A History of Wales 1485-1660*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1972, p. 64.

change being that people lodged their cases in the Courts of Great Sessions because of the amount of financial compensation requested.

Transcriptions of the witchcraft as words cases in Appendix I (below) have been arranged according to the court circuit in which the cases were lodged in the records of the Courts of Great Sessions with the additions of those cases located in Quarter Sessions records. The witchcraft as words cases all concern women who either brought cases for the slander of being called a witch only, or in conjunction with other slanders, such as thief, whore, harlot and so on. The subject of the witch related slander was always, therefore, female, a gender specificity which was reflective of Welsh popular belief. Another important point which the case studies show is that nearly every case was brought by the slandered woman and her husband, if she had one, usually against the slanderer and her husband, if she had one. Cases could, however, be brought by women alone against other single women, single men or against a husband and wife. English law required that a slandered woman bring her case accompanied by or in conjunction with her husband. Welsh customary law however, did not require women to ask for judgement on a case accompanied by their husbands.

The point is that the witchcraft as words cases were operating under two different legal concepts. The primary legal system, in the judicial and administrative sense, was the Courts of Great Sessions which, theoretically, operated under English statute law. The other, and perhaps more important as far as the Welsh people were concerned, was the traditional legal system which dealt entirely with customary law and practice and which had been supplanted by the Acts of Union. The witchcraft as words cases were being lodged for financial compensation and, according to the pre-1543 traditional Welsh legal system, a woman's honour and the financial value of that honour could only be determined in association with her nearest male relative. If the woman was married, that man was her husband but, if she was not married, the nearest male relative was either her father. Whether the woman was married or not, the witchcraft as words cases were reflective of the concepts inherent in the *Law of Women*, the concept of *sarhaed*. The woman had her own social status but every Welsh woman's status and honour price was related to and determined by the status of her husband or next male relative if she was unmarried.

The importance of court cases lodged in conjunction with a husband was based on the formula used by each plaintiff in order to establish her honour and status: every case brought by the woman in conjunction with her husband stated both her husband's and the husband of the slanderer's occupation. This procedure defined both the status and social place of the slandered and the slanderer and underlined the damage such a slander did to one woman's reputation and the ability of the slanderer's family to pay the requested amount of damages in compensation required to re-establish the damaged reputation. The woman's place and status was directly dependent upon her husband, her nearest male relative, a point emphasised in the two cases concerning Jane Jones in

the Courts of Great Sessions for Denbigh.

Jane Jones brought Katherine verch Eubule to court claiming 100 pounds in damages.³⁹ On 16th December 24 1684 at Ruthin, Katherine verch Eubule, whilst talking to Jane's mother Lawry verch Evan, stated " Lladrones diod a witch vront y diw dy verch di." (Thy daughter is a stealer of drinke and a filthy witch). The outcome is unknown. Eleven years later, however, Edward Lloyd and Jane (Jones), his wife, brought a five hundred pound damages claim against Henry Powell at the sessions held in March 36 Charles II.⁴⁰ The details of the case were contained in a declaration,⁴¹ but the outcome was unknown. Jane and Edward employed an attorney to present their case and questions could be raised as to the possible relationship between the counsel, Eubule Thelwall, and the slanderer in the first case Jane lodged when she was a single woman, Katherine verch Eubule. Perhaps they were father and daughter.

Bringing the case against a married woman in conjunction with her husband not only established the ability of the slanderer's family to pay compensation for the damage to reputation, it also explained why one woman brought cases against several people claiming different amounts of compensation. The ability of the slanderer's husband and family to pay had to be established. Whilst the slandered woman's honour and status did not change (because her husband's status remained the same) the compensation

³⁹ NLW, Great Sessions P. 680 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1673) Sessions for --- ? April 25 Charles II.

⁴⁰ NLW, Great Sessions P. 720 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1684) Sessions for --- ? March 36 Charles II.

⁴¹ *Declaration:* And thereupon the aforesaid Edward and Jane, by Evan Vaughan their attorney, complain that, whereas the said Jane now is a true and faithful subject of the lord king, and from the time of her nativity has behaved herself and for the whole of the aforesaid time has not been guilty, accused or suspected of witchcraft, fornication or adultery and was and is reputed among her neighbours and other subjects of the said lord King: and from the time of her marriage with the aforesaid Edward, her husband, for eleven years has lived chastely without (t) infraction of the conjugal sacrament: nevertheless the aforesaid Henry on the last day of February last past in the open street at Ruthin, in the presence and hearing of many faithful subjects of the said lord king well understanding the Welsh language, falsely and maliciously (and) with a loud voice spoke to and of the same Jane these Welsh words, that is to say:

" Witch ddrug llygatyn-wraig wit ti (meaning the same Jane), ti (meaning the same Jane) a llygatynaist fy mhlentin (meaning the child of the same Henry), hwr ddrwg gastgyn haig yn gorwedd dan din pawb dan din y caie, hwr feddw, pittain drwg yn codi y gwyr oi (gl) gwlae odd i wrth i gwragedd i horwa dan din y caie, puttein John Ellis and John Williams. "

Which words signify in English

" Thou (meaning the same Jane) art a wicked witch, thou (meaning the said Jane) didst bewitch my child (meaning the child of the same Henry), wicked whore, proud bitch, lying under every bodyes breech under the hedges, drunken whore, naughty queen yt raisest ye husbands out of their beds from their wives to wander under hedges, John Ellis and John Williams whore. "

By which false and malicious words so spoken the said Edward and Jane say that they are damned and have damage to the value of 50 pounds. And therefore thy bring the suit etc. (Counsel's signature:) Eubule Thelwall

amount claimed had to reflect the honour and status of the slandered woman, hence the claim amounts were tied to the financial value of the honour and status of the slanderer. The point is reflected in the many witchcraft as words cases which Agnes verch Maddock began to lodge in Courts of Great Sessions for Denbigh in 1604.⁴² Agnes verch Maddock, wife of David ap Roger brought a case against John Rice of Wrexham and his wife Margaret for thirty pounds. Margaret had spoken these Welsh words to Agnes on 1st April that year at Wrexham “ Agnes verch Maddock syth yn witch ag a vy benna witch ar a troidodd ddair irioed. (Agnes verch Maddock ys a witch and hath been the chiefeste witch that ever did treade the grownde).” The plea was not guilty but issue was taken with the plea.⁴³

At the same sessions Agnes and her husband also brought a case for thirty pounds against Randle ap Robert of Wrexham, yeoman, and his wife Margaret. On the same day and at the same place, Margaret had said “ Ni edryches : v yth yn dda ir pen fym i yn hy Agnes verch Madocke bledig mae hi wedi vy witchio i. (I have never looked well sythince I have ben in the house of Agnes verch Madocke for she hath bewitched me.” The plea was not guilty but issue was also taken with this plea.⁴⁴ The bill of costs⁴⁵ brought a verdict for the plaintiff although this verdict was not enrolled. Damages were assessed at 2d and the total bill of costs was four pounds 16s 7d and the court allowed four pounds 4s. However, the matter may not have ended with this court ruling as, six years later, another case was brought by Agnes verch Maddock against Randle ap Robert and his wife Margaret of Wrexham. ⁴⁶ David ap Roger and Agnes verch Maddock, his wife, brought a case for 40 pounds against David Jones and Katherine, his wife. Agnes stated that on 17th September 1610 at Wrexham, Margaret had said of Agnes “Witche (wyty). (Thou art a witch).” David and Catherine/Katherine responded

⁴² NLW, Great Sessions 13/6 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1604) Sessions for Denbigh 23 April 2 James I.

⁴³ NLW, Great Sessions 21/104, m.18a.

⁴⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 21/104, m. 8a.

⁴⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 13/6.

⁴⁶ NLW, Great Sessions 13/6 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1610) Sessions for Wrexham 8 October 8 James I.

by entering a plea through their attorney.⁴⁷

Agnes verch Madocke (sic) was indicted for being a common litigatrix and a disturber of the peace at Wrexham on 3 October 1610 and at other places. William Owen of Wrexham gave a pledge for traverse, the plea was not guilty. The document was endorsed by David Jones, prosecutor 'Billa vera against Agnes verch Madocke for a scowle.'⁴⁸ However, Agnes verch Maddock and her husband had lodged another case at the 1610 sessions against David Jones himself alone, and this case was also for forty pounds.⁴⁹ Agnes claimed, that on the 31st July 1610 at Wrexham, David Jones said, in Welsh to Agnes that she was a "Witche oyty ag fo ddarfy.... (Thou art a witche...)." A plea and order was returned in October 1611, the outcome for Agnes was the same as that of the case which she had lodged against David Jones and his wife Katherine.⁵⁰

Widows were not averse to bringing witchcraft as words cases to court, since their damages claims were probably based on the status of their deceased husbands as

47 Plea: David and Catherine, by their attorney, come and deny the force and wrong etc. And say that the aforesaid David and Agnes ought not to have or maintain their action against them, because they say on the day when the words were supposed to have been spoken there was a certain conference had and moved between the said Catherine and the aforesaid Agnes of and concerning a certain rumour and report about the aforesaid Agnes current among her neighbours, that is to say : that the said Agnes previously had offered bended silver to a certain statue or idol called " LLanelyan Kymyan" for intercession in that the curses of the aforesaid Agnes had prevailed against her enemies and adversaries and their goods and chattels, and of and concerning a certain cow of the same David Jones which cow had died suddenly after the curses of the same Agnes against the same David and Catherine and their goods and chattels. And of and concerning another cow of one John Boodle with whom and with his wife aforesaid Agnes had quarrelled a little before and had cursed them and their goods and chattels, and afterwards one cow of the aforesaid John Boodle died suddenly , about which the aforesaid Agnes on the said same day and year said to the said Catherine that she had power to suddenly cause and subtilly destroy her enemies and their goods and chattels, upon which words the aforesaid Catherine said to the same Agnes, because of her virulent power: " Yr ydw fy yn tybyed dy fod dy yn wytch." (I think that you are a witch.)

Without this, that the aforesaid Catherine spoke, stated or broadcast to or of the aforesaid Agnes the aforesaid words mentioned in the aforesaid declaration in manner and form as the aforesaid Roger and Agnes have alleged above. And this etc.

Order: Oct 9 James 1 " It is ordered by the cort that the parties assentes, that this matter and all other matters , suts and variances depending between the said parties shall be referred to the order and determinacion of Mr. Morgan Broughton and Mr. Thomas Traffored, and in default of order to be taken by them then to the umparedge and order of Mr. Roger Puleston. And ether parties to stand to and performe such order as the shall take therin, and all sutes, accones and appeals depending between the said parties in all cortes as well temporall and spiritual to be staied until the first day of the next Great Sessions and of further order to be taken ether by the said gentlemen or by this cort. And in default of order to be taken by said gentlemen, then they to certifie this cort in whome they fynd the default, whereby the said Justices may take further order therin. And the prothonotary to deliver to the said gentlemen copies of such examinacions as remayne in this cort to be by them considered of if they do require the same. And the copies of the same deposiciones to be brought back againe to the cort if the said gentlemen make no end therein . "

48 NLW, Great Sessions 4/15/3/27.

49 NLW, Great Sessions 13/6 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1610).

50 See NLW, Great Sessions 4/15/3/27.

well as the status of the men who slandered them or the husbands of the women who had spoken the slander. In a case from Pembroke, Margaret Collyns, a widow, brought a case of one hundred pounds against David Mabb at the Haverfordwest sessions in 1634.⁵¹ Margaret declared that on 12th June 1634 at Rosem(ar)kett , David Mabb said to her (in English), "Thou art an ould witch and I will p(ro)ve thee to be a whitch (sic)." Margaret Collyns appeared to have some difficulties with members of the Mabb family as, at the same sessions, Margaret also lodged a case for one hundred pounds against John Mabb, as she declared that John Mabb had used these English words at Rosem(ar)kett : " Thou art an ould witch and I will p(ro)ve thee to be a witch."⁵²

The outcome of both cases is unknown but the next case (Deposition 114) concerned a James Collyns who brought a case against David Mabb for one hundred pounds. Margaret Collyns did not, in effect, have to rely on her deceased husband's status as the case before the court immediately after hers was lodged by either her son or brother against the same slanderers. It seems that David Mabb had called James Collyns a thief because James had, according to David Mabb, both stolen and shorn David Mabb's sheep. This charge was also spoken aloud at Rosem(ar)kett but on 20th July 1634. The relationship between Margaret and James Collyns is not known although they could well have been mother and son, since Margaret was declared a widow in her original deposition, or they could have been brother and sister.⁵³ Whatever the relationship, David and John Mabb certainly seemed to have borne Margaret and James Collyns some ill will which may have prompted Margaret's original slander claim. James Collyns then lodged his case as a slander case, not to prove or disprove he was a thief, but to clear his name of the slander.⁵⁴

Two cases from Flint concern widowed women. Elizabeth Skasbrig, a widow, brought a case, by herself, for one hundred pounds against William Moores.⁵⁵ Elizabeth stated that on 31st May 1635 at Hawarden, Moores had spoken these words in English: "Shee is a witch and shee hath wretched mee my goods and cattles." The outcome is unknown. Another slander case for Flint was that of Alice Lloyd, a widow, who brought a

⁵¹ NLW, Great Sessions 13/29-1 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1634) Sessions for Haverfordwest 14 September 10 Charles I.

⁵² NLW, Great Sessions 13/29-1 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1634) Sessions for Haverfordwest 14 September 10 Charles I.

⁵³ As in all Welsh cases, the surname cannot be relied upon for establishing a relationship with certainty as "Collyns" could have been Margaret's birth name or she may have taken her husband's surname on her marriage. This was a matter of individual choice for every Welsh woman on the occasion of her marriage.

⁵⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 13/29-1 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1634) Sessions for Haverfordwest 14 September 10 Charles I, Deposition 114.

⁵⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 13/45-1 Great Sessions for Flint (1635) Sessions for Flint 19 October 11 Charles I.

case for forty pounds against James Morgan in 1677.⁵⁶ She declared that on 4th June, 1677, at Mould, Morgan had spoken these Welsh words to her and about her:

"Potten yw ti a wict yw ti." (Thou art a whore and thou art a witch.) The outcome was unknown but the case was one of the few in which the "witch" part of the slander came after the slander of being a whore. In almost all other cases the "witch" aspect was the first mentioned, not the last.

In those cases brought by spinsters or widows, the nearest male could not be cited although some of the spinster cases involved sons and brothers which did establish the social place of the woman concerned. The Pembroke case of Margaret Collyns was an example of this situation as Margaret, a widow, lodged her case against David Mabb⁵⁷ and Margaret's son, at the same sessions, lodged a slander case against the same David Mabb as he had slandered James Collyns, saying he was a thief.⁵⁸ Similarly, some witchcraft as words cases which were brought by single women established their status indirectly. The initial case for Jane Jones, lodged against Katherine verch Eubule,⁵⁹ was followed immediately by the next case in which Jane Jones lodged a case against Reginald Owen who had allegedly told Jane's brother that she was a thief and had broken into John Owen's seller (cellar).⁶⁰

Some of the witchcraft as words cases involving single women have no surviving financial compensation request attached to the case.⁶¹ In a case from Denbigh, Catherine Salusbury, a spinster, brought a case against John Jones, gentleman, in 1712.⁶² Catherine stated that, on 20th August 1710 at pa. Llaneilian, John Jones had spoken both to her and about her ("then and now unmarried and a pure, chaste and honest virgin") these scandalous Welsh words " Pittan witch boeth wyt ti. (Thou art a whore and a burnt witch.)" The outcome is unknown. It took Catherine two years to lodge her case against John Jones. The incident took place in 1710 and was heard in court in 1712 but was not accompanied by any surviving damages claim.

Another such case is from Pembroke. At the 1783 sessions held at Haverfordwest on

56 NLW, Great Sessions P. 358 Great Sessions for Flint (1677) Sessions for Flint 8 October 29 Charles II.

57 NLW, Great Sessions 13/29-1 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1634) Sessions for Haverfordwest 14th September 10 Charles I.

58 *ibid.*, Deposition 114.

59 NLW, Great Sessions P. 680 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1673) Sessions for --- ? April 25 Charles II.

60 NLW, Great Sessions P. 680 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1673) Sessions for --- ? April 25 Charles II, Deposition 110.

61 It has to be assumed that there was one initially as the case would have begun in the quarter sessions and moved to the Great Sessions if compensation of over 40 shillings was requested. Both of these cases were, however, very late in the early modern period, 1712 and, particularly, 1783.

62 NLW, Great Sessions P. 755 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1712) Sessions for Denbigh 22 September 11 Anne.

30 August, Dinah Reed, a spinster brought James Chubb of Narberth parish, who was an officer of excise, to court.⁶³ No damages claim was made and information was presented in a declaration.⁶⁴ In all, there were five statements regarding the words. James Chubb was found "Not Guilty" but issue was taken.⁶⁵

The evidence indicates that being an unmarried woman did not prevent such women bringing cases to court and citing specific damages. Eleanor Gravell brought a case against John Preson⁶⁶ for one hundred pounds stating that he had used scandalous Welsh words against her at Flint on 24th January 1608. "Witch ydiw hi, y mae hi yn vy witchio i ar y ddair. (She is a witch, she doth bewitch me upon the earthe)." At the April sessions in 1611, the outcome was damages of 13s and 4d assessed for the plaintiff although the total bill of costs was estimated at three pounds 9s 5d. Two other cases from Flint were also brought by unaccompanied women for specific damages amounts. Ursula Parry, a spinster, brought a case for one hundred pounds against John Jones and his wife Magdalene in 1660⁶⁷ because Magdalene had, on 15th August of that year, at Brynbiachan, spoken these words to Ursula in Welsh : "Witch ydiw Ursula Parry, ag hee a witchodd fi am plentyn oddair yn traed." (Ursula Parry is a witch, and she did bewitch me and my child off our feet/legges.) Ursula stated that, at the same time, Magdalene had also said: "Landrone s wyt ti Ursula Parry (Ursula Parry, thou art a theefe)." The outcome is unknown and the document is damaged.

Mary Tayler, whose marital status is not recorded, brought a case against Richard Street for an unspecified amount of damages in 1666.⁶⁸ Mary declared that on 22 July at Monicett (?), Richard Street had said (in English): "Thou art a witch, I will prove thee and I have thee burnt att a staike." The outcome is unknown. Richard Street seemed to have a reputation for poor behaviour in the community as the assault case for which he was indicted was against the town constable for Moore, one Thomas Starkie/ey.⁶⁹ A petition

⁶³ NLW, Great Sessions 28/171-2.

⁶⁴ Declaration: *The def. on 1 August 1783 at Narberth spoke to and of the plt. these scandalous words: "I have lost twenty guineas and you are the person that took and had them. I am certain that you had my money for the conjuror told me so."*

⁶⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 28/153, f. 404.

⁶⁶ NLW, Great Sessions 13/41-1 Great Sessions for Flint. (1610-11) Sessions for Hawarden 1st October 8 James I.

⁶⁷ NLW, Great Sessions P. 324 Great Sessions for Flint (1660) Sessions for --- 10 September 12 Charles II.

⁶⁸ NLW, Great Sessions P.336 Great Sessions for Flint (1666) Sessions for Flint 13 August 18 Charles II .

⁶⁹ NLW, Great Sessions P331 (1664) Great Sessions for Flint. Richard Street v. Thomas Starkie in which the defendant called Richard Street a thief. A petition by William Starkie against Richard Street. Thomas Starkie indicted Street for assault as whilst he was about his business as sworn constable of the township of Moore, Street had abused him. Starkie indicted Street for assault but Street had traversed the indictment and Starkie, by reason of his poverty, was not able to defend himself and prayed to be admitted in *forma pauperis*. Petition was allowed, Starkie making oath on 19th July that he was not worth 5 pounds.

against Richard Street from one William Starkie/ey exists in the same file and raises the question as to whether it was the William Starkie/ey involved in the 1617 slander case lodged against him by Katherine Banyon although there is a gap of fifty years between the two cases.⁷⁰

A case from Montgomery came to court in 1648 and concerned Anne Pryce, a spinster, who brought a case against Thomas Webley and his wife Elenor (sic) for one hundred pounds.⁷¹ Anne stated that on 10th July 24 1648 at "The Welshe Towne" (Welshpool) Elenor spoke to and of Anne "Wytch wyt, ac tydi a elli fy wytcho fi fal i wytchest di er aill. (Thow art a witch, and thou mayest bewitch me as thou hadst bewitched others.)" Previous cases for Montgomery concerned a Morris Pryce and his wife Catherine who brought two cases against Evan David ap Owen and his wife Joan in 1635 and 1636 for calling Catherine a witch.⁷² The two women may have been related, both referred to as witches and capable of bewitchment activities as both women were also slandered for actions of bewitchment.

Women also brought cases against women although this was not common. In a case from Montgomery, Jane Meredith, a spinster, brought a case for an unspecified amount against Joan Miris, a widow, at the spring sessions on 17th March 1650/51.⁷³ Jane stated that on 28th April 1650 at Welshpool, Joan said " Allan a thi am ty i witch, di a withiest dy ew(ythr) oi haner i wared, mi a wel(aist) dy yn dwad mewn trwy dwll y klo dair gwaith me bedair. (Out of my house witch, thou didst bewitch thy uncle from ye mydle downward; I saw thee coming through a hole in ye lock three or foure times)."

The whole point of bringing the witchcraft as words cases to court was, ostensibly, to gain an amount of money in recompense for the damage to reputation which the slandered thought she had suffered. The court cases have very few outcomes attached to the court documents and, when the outcome is known, the amount of damages awarded, compared to the amount requested, was extremely small. This raises the question of how important the outcome, in terms of financial recompense, actually was. Perhaps the emphasis on the amount requested, plus the lodgement of the case in court, was far more important to the slandered woman than the money for which she had asked. In other words, the fact that she lodged a case may have been considered sufficient action for restitution of her honour as far as both she and her community were

⁷⁰ NLW, Great Sessions 13/42-1. William Banyon and his wife Katherine lodged a 40 pound damages case against William Starkie and his wife Anne as Anne had called Katherine a witch.

⁷¹ NLW, Great Sessions 13/15 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1648) Session for Welshpool 16 October 24 Charles I.

⁷² NLW, Great Sessions 13/14 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1635) Sessions for Welshpool 20 April 11 Charles I and LW, Great Sessions 13/14 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1636) Sessions for Montgomery 24 October 12 Charles I.

⁷³ NLW, Great Sessions 13/16 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1650/51) Sessions for ---- 17 March 1650/51.

concerned.

Other witchcraft as words cases were lodged with no damage amount specified, perhaps underlining the fact that case lodgement was more important because the slandered was seen to have taken some action towards restitution of her honour and reputation. It should not, however, be forgotten that damages must have been specified at some stage for the case to have been brought before the Courts of Great Sessions. A case in point occurred in 1662 at the Montgomery sessions held on 6 October when David Wynne and his wife Katherine brought a case against Edward Longland and his wife Mary for an unspecified amount.⁷⁴ They claimed that on the 6th September, at Welshpool, "in a certain discourse had with Jane and Humphrey Prichard of Welshpool," the following scandalous Welsh words were spoken : "Witch yh hi ag hi a witchwdd fywch Ester Tilley. (Shee is a witch and she hath bewitched Ester Tilley's cowe)." The outcome is unknown.

Two cases concerning the slandering of Catherine Pryce also emphasise the importance of being seen to attempt to achieve restitution of honour through the courts rather than actual financial recompense. The initial case lodged by Morris Pryce and his wife Catherine was for unspecified damages against Evan David ap Owen and his wife Jane in 1635.⁷⁵ Catherine claimed that on 21st August at Beriowe Jane said "Ffwrdd witch, witch wyt/ac tydi a witchest fy mywch i /. (Awye wytch, thou art a wytch/ and thou didst bewytched my cowe /)." The outcome is unknown. However, the following year, at the 1636 sessions, Morris Pryce and his wife Catherine again brought Evan David ap Owen and Jane, his wife to court, but this time with a specified damages claim of 100 pounds.⁷⁶ Catherine also stated that Jane had reiterated her words on the same day but this time at Allt Ucha: " Witch wyt ac myfi ath brifia di yn witch, ac tydi a witchest fy mywch i. (Thou art a wytch and I will prove thee to be a wytch, and thou didst bewitch my cowe)." The outcome of both cases is unknown. The inclusion of a damages amount for the second time that Catherine had been slandered by the same people for being a witch, may have been Catherine's statement that the damaging slanders had to be discontinued. Perhaps, more importantly, because the second slander contained more threatening words: "I will prove thee to be a wytch."

Large amounts of money claimed for damages were a common factor in every witchcraft as words case and, whilst greed cannot be discounted as a motive, the reason for the succinct case statements and the amount of damages was probably more related to the pre-1536 Welsh practice of guarding a woman's honour and the financial value of that

⁷⁴ NLW, Great Sessions P.991 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1662) Sessions for --- 6 October 14 Charles II.

⁷⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 13/14 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1635) Sessions for Welshpool 20 April 11 Charles I.

⁷⁶ NLW, Great Sessions 13/14 Great Sessions for Montgomery (1636) Sessions for Montgomery 24 October 12 Charles I.

honour in the eyes of her kin and community. In other words, the asking price for a compensatory payment was based on the honour price and the value of the woman and concerned the amount of damage the slander had done to her reputation. It is a contention of this thesis that witchcraft as words cases followed the same premise as that of the principles of *sarhaed* in the Welsh Law of Women. According to these laws, the slandered woman and her next male relative, usually her husband, brought a case for financial compensation based on their assessment of the slandered woman's worth. Unmarried women brought cases against the slanderer on their own, also in accordance with a woman's right to accrue financial compensation for her dishonouring in any state, unmarried or married.

Under both the Law of Women and the new legal system which arose after the Acts of Union, the individual who had been slandered was responsible for clearing his or her name since the slander was a direct challenge to the honour of that individual. But it was the slanderer who had to prove that he or she did not say the actual slanderous words as that was not regarded as being the responsibility of the individual who was the subject of the slander. In early modern Wales, the person who was wronged and who did not take action was regarded by society as the guilty party, following much the same principle as the wife who did not leave her sexually wayward husband in the Law of Women.⁷⁷

- The Welsh penchant for litigation in the early modern period can be directly linked to the concept of challenge through legal means as opposed to challenge through physical combat.⁷⁸ The traditional approach of solving conflict concerning the besmirching of individual honour through arbitration and agreed compensatory payments for the wrong inflicted by one party on another continued to be practised in the Courts of Great Sessions. Welsh people continued to apply the traditional approach and resolution for the slandering of a woman for being a witch or for witchcraft practices through the newly available judicial mechanism of the Courts of Great Sessions. Reputation still had to be preserved. The ecclesiastical courts were used probably at a later date because they were inexpensive and may, by the eighteenth century, have been the only courts wherein such a case would be heard. The nature of the slander was not the issue in Welsh witchcraft as words cases.

Some cases were lodged with enormous amounts of money requested as damages: one hundred, two hundred, five hundred and even one thousand pounds. The likelihood of such amounts being obtained was infinitesimal but did make the point that the slandered woman and her family placed a high value on her social status and the degree of her honour. Such enormous amounts may also have acted as a means of stating to the slanderer how deeply the insult was felt and, also, as a method of gaining a

⁷⁷ See Chapter III The Customary *Law of Women*: Social Place and Cultural Status.

⁷⁸ See R.R. Davies, "The Survival of the Bloodfeud in medieval Wales." *History*, LIV, 1969, p. 338-357. for a discussion of the compensation treaty payments and agreements concerning the paying out of a blood debt by the slayers' kin.

retraction through the threat of such a large sum in recompense should the case be successful. Rice Mortymer and Margaret his wife, brought a damages case of two hundred pounds against William Garnons and his wife Margaret, at the autumn sessions for Pembroke in 1638.⁷⁹ Margaret Mortymer declared that Margaret Garnons had said "Witch yt tu ag my fu a bryfia (du) di yn witch, a llandrones fy awr i wyt tu. (Thou art a witch and I will p(ro)ve thee to be a witch, and thou didst steale my gold.)"⁸⁰ Morris James of Haverfordwest, a gentleman and his wife Mary brought a case for two hundred pounds damages against Peter Davies of Haverfordwest and his wife Mary in 1661.⁸¹ In a Declaration drawn up by Mr. Fuxley, Mary James declared that both Peter and Mary Davies had publicly stated that Mary James was "Witch, whore, stockster, and that thou (meaning the plts. wife) has bewitched my child and my drinke, and my childe is yet sicke and thou didst doe it."⁸² A case from Brecon concerned Henry Probert Esq. and his wife Elizabeth who brought a case against John Griffith, a clerk, for one thousand pounds at the sessions in 1634.⁸³ The defendant stated that Griffith had spoken in English to David Jones, another clerk, at St. Davids concerning Elizabeth: " Mrs. Probert is a weech and hath beweeched my father in lawe Edward Games and beweeched my uncle John Games, gent."⁸⁴

Cases which do have outcomes attached indicate that the actual amounts received were very small, sometimes insufficient to cover court costs. Only three of the witchcraft as words cases have outcomes attached. The outcome of the case of Eleanor Gravell, cited as an unmarried woman who brought a damages claim of one hundred pounds, was known as, at the April sessions in 1611, damages of 13s and 4d were assessed for the plaintiff although the total bill of costs was estimated at three pounds 9s 5d.⁸⁵ Another case for Flint, lodged in 1617, was brought by William Banyon and his wife Katherine. The case for forty pounds was against William Starkie and his wife Anne.⁸⁶ Anne, at Hawarden earlier that year, had allegedly said to Katherine " Thaw art a witch," in English.⁸⁷ The outcome was that the verdict was for the plaintiff and assessed at

79 NLW, Great Sessions 13/29-2 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1638) Sessions for ---- on ---- 14 Charles I.

80 The outcome is unknown.

81 NLW, Great Sessions P. 2940 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1661).

82 A note attached to this case indicated that Peter and Mary Davies were in debt to the James' for 3 pounds 3s as the James' had lent the Davies' 20s on 10th November, 20s more on 12th December, 20s more on 4th February and 3s more on 12th March. The outcome is unknown.

83 NLW, Great Sessions 13/20-2 Great Sessions for Brecon (1634) Sessions for Brecon 16 March 16 Charles I.

84 An elaborate declaration was attached to this case but the outcome is unknown.

85 NLW, Great Sessions 13/41-1 Great Sessions for Flint. (1610-11) Sessions for Hawarden 1st October 8 James I.

86 NLW, Great Sessions 13/42-1 Great Sessions for Flint (1617) Sessions for Flint 8 September 15 James I.

87 The use of English rather than Welsh was unusual in witchcraft as words cases in early modern Wales.

damages at 20s but in the 1618 bill of costs, the total of the plaintiffs' costs was for the sum of three pounds and 14s 6d.

In the 1718 sessions for Anglesey, held at Beaumaris on 3 October 1718, Alexander Williams and his wife Ann brought a case for two hundred pounds against William Roberts of Llanddaisant, a weaver (textor).⁸⁸ Ann declared that William had spoken to her at Erianell, saying "Witch a lladrones. (Witch and thief)." A plea of not guilty was entered but issue was taken and the verdict was given for the plaintiff with damages assessed at 41s and costs at 1d with 7 pounds and 6d increment by the court.

Damages and outcomes were an important aspect of the witchcraft as words cases, and there are several reasons for the lack of recorded outcomes. Apart from the fact that lodging a case, citing damages, may have been deemed an adequate response by both the slandered and her community, perhaps the most obvious reason for no outcome was that the case was settled out of court. Suggett⁸⁹ has raised some important considerations surrounding the outcome of slander cases in early modern Wales. Very few cases proceeded to trial despite the fact that the cases were pleaded to issue and were ready for trial. In both the Elizabethan and Stuart periods in Wales, the justices of the peace considered that their task was complete when the examinations had been taken and the accuser, suspect and witnesses had been bound to appear at the next Court of Great Sessions. However, as the day of the court appearance neared, the suspect "falleth to take for an end to be had with the partie pursuant and in the end agreeth with him so that the prosecutor will stopp the cause as much as he may."⁹⁰ The prosecutor was, nevertheless, bound to prosecute but he did so in a manner which saved his recognizance but which did not produce clear evidence against the suspect. In consequence, the suspect was discharged by proclamation as no evidence had been produced against him or her. The examinations lay "still in the dock and never once pursued nor looked upon wherein would appear sufficient matter to condemn him."⁹¹

The cases which reached a verdict usually recorded a verdict in favour of the plaintiff and the amount of damages was decided which was far less than the original damages claim.⁹² The damages amounts were awarded by the juries⁹³ who sat on the case and this may have been another reason why the amounts were so small: juries were made up of local people who were probably well aware of the relationship, good or otherwise, between the two conflicting parties and the motives behind the words which were

⁸⁸ NLW, Great Sessions 16/39 Great Sessions for Anglesey (1718) Sessions for Beaumaris 3 October 5 George I. An Imparlances to 29 July 5 George I (1719) accompanied the documents. A plea of not guilty was entered but issue was taken and declared *Venire facias*.

⁸⁹ R.F. Suggett, "Slander in Early-Modern Wales." op. cit. p.142

⁹⁰ ibid, p.vi. citing Owen, *Dialogue on the Government of Wales*, c1600.

⁹¹ ibid., p. vi. citing Owen op. cit.

⁹² R.F. Suggett, "Slander in Early-Modern Wales." op. cit., p. 142.

⁹³ ibid.

spoken as well as those for the lodgement of the witchcraft as words case.

The lack of known outcomes may also be related to the process of arbitration. The matters in dispute were submitted to the judgement of arbitrators who then recorded their decision in a written form. In the case of David ap Roger and his wife Agnes verch Maddock versus David Jones and his wife Katherine, Mr. Morgan Broughton and Mr. Thomas Trafford acted as arbitrators.⁹⁴ The arbitration procedure was not one of mediation as the two parties did not reach a resolution amenable to them both with the help of an objective third party. Rather, the arbitrators imposed their decision on the two parties and the two parties in dispute then bound themselves by a conditional bond to perform the award.⁹⁵

However, whilst arbitration was an option, the process did not necessarily mean that a successful outcome was reached between all parties concerned,⁹⁶ despite the fact that arbitration was common practice by the late sixteenth century.⁹⁷ It was a means of settling disputes which reflected the Welsh tendency to emphasise reconciliation between parties rather than concentrate on punishment⁹⁸ and "It seems clear... that arbitration held a prominent place in early Welsh judicial principles and procedures."⁹⁹ Arbitrators were usually neutral, a neutrality which arose from their status, whether they were members of the kin group, gentry families, wives and daughters of the disputing parties or, sometimes, poets.¹⁰⁰

Slander cases which were lodged for damages often sought a retraction of the slander and, as the civil courts could not provide a retraction, arbitration was used, "a common end to actions of slander which never reached trial."¹⁰¹ Evidence also shows that cases were arbitrated after the parties concerned had pleaded and the case was ready to go to trial. Certain awards were associated with arbitration: the plaintiff could be given an apology and the payment of their costs. The defendant avoided paying large amounts in damages and the two agreed to stay all legal proceedings. Penalty bonds were then placed on both parties to safeguard the agreements which had been reached by the arbitrators. If the agreement was not met, the parties forfeited the bond which was a large

⁹⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 13/6 Great Sessions for Denbigh (1610), Sessions for Wrexham 8 October 8 James I cited above.

⁹⁵ Richard F. Suggett, *An Analysis and Calendar of Early Modern Welsh Defamation Suits*, Vol.1 , op. cit. , p. v .

⁹⁶ Llinos Beverley-Smith, "Disputes and Settlements in Medieval Wales : The Role of Arbitration." *English Historical Review*, No. CCCCXXI, October 1991, p. 836.

⁹⁷ ibid., p. 836.

⁹⁸ ibid., p. 839 citing D. Jenkins, "The Significance of the Law of Hywel." *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1977, pp. 66-7, 71-7.

⁹⁹ Llinos Beverley-Smith, op. cit., p. 840 with particular reference to medieval Wales.

¹⁰⁰ ibid , p. 853-855.

¹⁰¹ R.F. Suggett, "Slander" op. cit., p.143.

sum, usually twenty pounds.¹⁰² Other witchcraft as words cases may well have been settled out of court, therefore no outcome was recorded in court documents.

Stating the words used by the slanderer in Welsh was an important aspect of the witchcraft as words cases because Welsh was dropped from the declarations around 1560 on all the circuits for Wales. Welsh was, however, reinstated in the 1590s, perhaps due to judgements in the Westminster courts which stated that "declarations must expressly allege what words were spoken."¹⁰³ Language was very important because the slander was not actionable if the hearers could not understand what was said. By the end of the sixteenth century, all the words spoken were quoted verbatim in the declarations before the Courts of Great Sessions, the Welsh accompanied by an English translation. The Welsh words were important because the translation of these alone may have resulted in making the slander non-actionable.¹⁰⁴ The form of the slander, whether written or spoken, in early modern Wales before the Restoration, was not distinguished one from the other because written slanders were very rare and usually concerned allegations of felonies.¹⁰⁵

Defamation, attacking the fame of the individual, was considered to be a wrong in the spiritual sense and the ecclesiastical courts dealt with such cases before the Reformation.¹⁰⁶ Defamation was considered to be a separate type of wrong as defamatory words were deemed a "sin" if such words implied a spiritual or moral offence. Defamation was actionable in the ecclesiastical courts where the punishment for the sin involved public recantation, penance and sometimes a public reconciliation,¹⁰⁷ circumstances with which the two parties did not always agree. If these punishments were not undertaken, the defamer was excommunicated.¹⁰⁸ Ecclesiastical courts oversaw cases of defamation well into the eighteenth century and no damages were given and the suit could only be lodged for punishment by way of penance. If the offence was proved in the ecclesiastical court, the offender was excommunicated. If the excommunicate did not apply for absolution, a writ for imprisonment was issued against the offender and he or she was imprisoned without bail or mainprize (meaning friendly custody) until he or she conformed.

Excommunication could be overcome at this juncture if the offender sought absolution and a paper from Brecon details the absolution of Catherine Powell in 1735. Catherine Powell was a widow from Llanvihangell (Llanfihangel) nant Bran in the county of Brecon.

¹⁰² ibid., p.144.

¹⁰³ ibid., p.124.

¹⁰⁴ ibid., p.124-125.

¹⁰⁵ ibid., p.126.

¹⁰⁶ Richard F. Suggett, "Slander in Early Modern Wales." op.cit., p.120-121.

¹⁰⁷ ibid., p.145.

¹⁰⁸ ibid., p.119.

In 1735 she and Walter Williams, a gentleman of Penpont (Penypont), had defamed Sarah the wife of Thomas Price of the parish of Llanllnant Bran (by saying what was not stated) and Catherine Powell had failed to appear to answer the charge at the Archdeacons Court at Brecon. As a consequence of her inaction, Catherine was excommunicated. Catherine Powell was persuaded to apply for absolution and she was granted the absolution on condition that she agreed to be bound to Nicholas, the Lord Bishop of St. Davids for the sum of one hundred pounds. The absolution was sealed and delivered in the presence of Edward Davies and signed by Catherine Powell and Walter Williams.¹⁰⁹ In reality, the effects of excommunication did not present a major problem until the individual died as burial was not permitted in consecrated ground. The body then had to be buried in unconsecrated ground.¹¹⁰

Welsh cases for slander and defamation do not appear in the ecclesiastical courts until the 1700s and these are restricted to the Llandaff courts. Ecclesiastical court records for Wales exist only from the mid 1580s in some courts as many records were either misplaced or destroyed. The ecclesiastical court records for Bangor exist from 1742-1792, St. David's from 1674-1838, the Archdeaconry of Brecon from 1662-1702, the Court of Arches from 1670-1798, the St. Asaph consistory court books from 1580-1772 and the Llandaff courts from 1710-1739. None of the surviving records contain witchcraft as words cases other than the Llandaff court records.

Slander cases lodged in the ecclesiastical courts were not and could not be of the same type as those lodged in the Courts of Great Sessions as slander cases in the church courts became defamation cases for a spiritual wrong or sin whereas slander in the

¹⁰⁹ John Lloyd, *Historical Memoranda of Breconshire A Collection of Papers from Various Sources relating to the History of the County*, Vol. I, Ellis Owen. "Brecon and Radnor Express" Offices, Brecon, 1903, Vol. I, p. 52.

¹¹⁰ Owain Jones, "The 'Anabaptists' of Llanafanfawr and Llysdinam.", *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XVIII, 1978-79, p. 74 - 75. Even though burial in unconsecrated ground occurred, the vicars of Llanafanfawr, amongst other vicars, had to record the death and burial in the register. The location of the burial was also recorded, James Thomas had set aside a field which he owned in which members of his group, the group of Dissenters located at Llanafanfawr, could be buried. The body of Catherine Edwards was exhumed in 1668 at Llanfihangel Bryn Pabuan and John Jones, the Baptist historian, knew of several people who had told him and believed that Catherine Edwards may have been the person buried at the crossroads between Llanfihangel and Penrhiew. This may, however, have been the body of the suicide Evan John Jones who was buried at Cefyn Yr Huch in 1685 and exhumed on the order of the magistrate of Builth, Samuel Pritchard. His body was then buried in a place unknown. Witches were sometimes buried at crossroads, the theory being that their ghosts would not know which way to travel if the body was so placed. Officials did hope that Dissenters would see the error of their ways and return to the Church, the reason for the form of absolution with which the vicar of Llanafanfawr was provided and copied into his register

*By the authority of this Commission directed unto me, I
abslove you from that sentence of excommunication in
which you are innodated by Decree of the Consistory Court
held for the Archdeaconry of Brecon within the Diocese of
St. Davids, and do restore you to the communion of the
Chirch and the participation of the holy sacrament, in the
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

secular court was a crime. The Llandaff defamation cases were concerned with a spiritual wrong and may have been lodged in this particular court because, by the eighteenth century, the business of the Courts of Great Sessions was in decline.¹¹¹ During the years of the Commonwealth, the church courts had lapsed but, "After the Commonwealth, the Court of Great Sessions seems to have been content to leave to the ecclesiastical courts defamatory allegations of immorality and also, after the abolition of the relevant statutes (1736), witchcraft."¹¹² Before this, witchcraft had posed a jurisdictional problem because it was actionable in both courts.¹¹³ This was not only a problem in Wales. For example, Essex archdeaconry court officials "corresponded with justices of the peace who were common lawyers whenever they both were interested in the same case. One area of continually overlapping concern was witchcraft..."¹¹⁴

However, the surviving Llandaff church court records concern cases which were lodged prior to 1736. Llandaff records contain only four defamation cases for witchcraft which dealt with the defaming of a person as a witch. These cases all concern women and began in 1712 with several more in 1722, after which, no more witchcraft as words cases appeared.¹¹⁵ Cases for defamation in the surviving records after the 1700s were not for financial recompense but for acknowledgment of a spiritual wrong committed by one person against another.

The four cases¹¹⁶ concerned women who brought the cases on their own, without citing their nearest male relative. The defamations were not solely about being called a witch but also for witching activities, being a whore, a slut, a harlot and a strumpet. Marital state and the names of the husbands of each victim were noted but the nature of the church court cases differed from the slander cases lodged in the courts of Great Session prior to the 1700s. Witchcraft as words cases in the courts of Great Sessions were normally brought in conjunction with the nearest male relative of both parties, the status of the male relative was always cited and the divergence was significant because the defamation cases in the church courts were concerned with spiritual wrong-doing, not temporal wrong-doing. There was no need for the defamed woman to bring the case in conjunction with her nearest male relative because she was not seeking financial recompense for the defamations. The cases were concerned only with acknowledgement that the woman had been defamed and that she was seeking to have the defamatory remarks punished through penance, recantation or whatever punishment the church court deemed appropriate.

¹¹¹ R.F. Suggett, op. cit., p.128.

¹¹² ibid., p.137.

¹¹³ ibid., p.128.

¹¹⁴ Brian P. Levack *The Civil Lawyers of England 1603-1641...* op. cit., p. 127.

¹¹⁵ Consistory Court, Diocese of Llandaff LL/CC/G/30 1712 ; LL/CC/G/271 (a-d) 1722-24; LL/CC/G/279 1722; LL/CC/G/286,286a, 1722

¹¹⁶ For full transcripts of all witchcraft as words cases in the temporal and secular courts, please see Appendix I Witchcraft as Words Case Study Transcripts.

The ecclesiastical cases for Wales were brought by women against women and occurred at a time which was well after the first Welsh witchcraft as *malefice* cases began to appear in the Courts of Great Sessions. What is perhaps significant about the witchcraft defamation cases in the ecclesiastical courts is that the church courts appear to have been the last rather than the first place where such cases are lodged. The evidence indicates that the slander and defamation cases were brought in the Courts of Great Session initially but later moved to the ecclesiastical courts. The reasons for this, however, are not clear.

The first case for defamation in the Llandaff court occurred in 1712, when Jane, the wife of William Miles, brought a libel case against Mary Miles who was a spinster.¹¹⁷ Both women were from Bonvilstone¹¹⁸ and the defendant stated that between April-December in 1712 at Bonvilstone, Mary Miles had defamed the plaintiff by twice saying "Yr whore, y buttain," and continuing with "Y witch y sy wedi witcho i gwr na na fe ond y wel hi yn dda." meaning "The whore, the harlott . Ye witch that has bewitchd her husband yt hee'l doe nothing but what she pleases or approves of." The outcome of the case is unknown. It seems most likely that this was a dispute between a sister and sister-in-law. The case may have highlighted difficulties within the Miles family concerning the power relations between the two women as the defamatory words attributed to Mary Miles, probably the spinster sister of William Miles, seemed to indicate an underlying resentment towards the influence which her sister-in-law had on William Miles.

A second case from the Llandaff courts occurred sometime between 1722-1724 when Gwenllian, who was the wife of Mathew Howell of Llangonydd, brought a case against Jennet Rees, the wife of John Lewis of Bettus.¹¹⁹ Gwenllian stated that Jennet had defamed her between May-June last at Langonydd by saying "Y witch. Y slutt." meaning "You witch or sorceress, you slutt or dirty whore." Several depositions from witnesses are attached to the case, one of which was that of Anne Evan, a thirty year old spinster of Langonwydd. On the 30th November 1722, Anne stated that she was at a market in June at Bridgend, a market town five miles from Langonwydd, and heard Jennet call Gwenllian " a witch and a slutt." She declared that Gwenllian was of good name and, when asked to elaborate on her testimony, she said that she did not remember any provocation by words or blows given by the plaintiff to the defendant, nor did she remember their discourse at the time of their quarrel. She stood very near the parties when they quarrelled and her fellow witness, Elizabeth William, stood so near them that she could well hear what was said for Gwenllian and Jennet had both spoken very loudly.

¹¹⁷ Spinster was an interesting phrase at it could, at this time, mean either that the woman was a spinner of wool and/or fibre or that she was an unmarried woman.

¹¹⁸ Consistory Court, Diocese of Llandaff LL/CC/G/30 (1712).

¹¹⁹ Consistory Court, Diocese of Llandaff L/CC/G/271 (a-d) (1722-24).

Elizabeth William of the parish of Bettws, also a spinster and aged 34, stated that she was also at Bridgend market a week or fortnight before last mid summer and heard Jennet call Wenllian (sic) "a witch and a slutt." Elizabeth was also asked to elaborate and said that she remembered that some words arose between the parties about the value of the wool which they both had to sell in the market. During the words, Gwen had spoken in Welsh to Jennet, calling her "y tullin" [owl?] but she was not aware of any other provocation given to the defendant. Elizabeth said that she also had wool to sell and sat between the parties when they quarrelled. Her fellow witness stood at her back and might well have heard what was spoken. A personal answer was submitted concerning the case in 1723 by the plaintiff's proctor, Jenkin William. He declared that he believed that the defendant ought to be punished in this court for calling her a witch. He believed that the word "slutt" was synonymous with "dirty whore" and may also be ecclesiastically punished, especially when spoken of a "civil and modest" woman such as was the plaintiff.

Another defamation case was brought in the Llandaff court in 1722 by Catherine, the wife of a gentleman, William Nicholls of Peterston super Ely, and she brought a case against Mary who was the wife of Evan Rees alias Morgan of the same place.¹²⁰ The defendant stated that in April-September 1722 at Peterston super Ely, she had been defamed by Mary who had spoken to her, saying "Y slutt, y sluttfront, y witch goch, y witch bengoch, yr buttain bengoch." meaning "The vel thou slutt, the nasty slutt, the vel thou witch, the vel thou red witch, thou red-headed witch, the vel thou red headed whore, the vel thou redheaded harlott." The outcome of this case is unknown.

Wenllian, the wife of Robert Vaughan of Magor in Monmouthshire, brought a case against Sarah, the wife of John Williams who resided in the same place.¹²¹ Wenllian said that in October-January last at Magor, she had been defamed when Sarah had spoken these words "Thou art a witch or sorceress and hast bewitched severall p/er/sons. Thou art a com/m/on whore and strumpett." The outcome is unknown.

The ecclesiastical records contain references only to libel and defamation and were not to slander. The difference was important as slander was a crime because it could cause a breach of the peace whereas defamation was not considered a crime sufficient to lodge a case in the secular courts. However, the defamation witchcraft cases for Wales appeared in the ecclesiastical courts well after the 1536-1543 Acts of Union which brought changes in the Welsh legal and judicial framework and before the repealing of the Witchcraft Act in 1736. The ecclesiastical courts had been the main tribunals in which women were tried after allegations of defamation were brought before the courts. The defamations implied that a woman was either acting as a witch or was practising witchcraft. Punishment of the defamer through a fine or some type of penance, resolved the case.

¹²⁰ Consistory Court, Diocese of Llandaff * LL/CC/G/279 (1722).

¹²¹ Consistory Court, Diocese of Llandaff * LL/CC/G/286, 286a (1722).

However, when the jurisdiction of witchcraft cases passed to either the Assizes or ordinary criminal courts, witchcraft became a serious felony and execution.¹²² a possibility because witchcraft was seen as *malefice* or intent to harm. The witches' actions were seen as intentional and premeditated, making witchcraft a crime against humanity, sometimes the state, and God. This was a key area of difference in Welsh witchcraft as words cases because Welsh cases began in the criminal courts of the Great Sessions, not in the ecclesiastical courts. The evidence indicates that Welsh witchcraft as words cases began in the criminal courts and later moved, as defamation cases, to the ecclesiastical courts just before the repealing of the Witchcraft Act in 1736.

The reason for the difference between witchcraft as words cases in England and Wales, despite the fact that both areas were subject to the same legal system, was the different perception that each country had in relation to witchcraft as slander and defamation as opposed to witchcraft as *malefice*. In Wales, the slandering of an individual for witchcraft was considered a very important criminal issue as it injured a person's reputation, honour and social place in the community. As such, an outcome reflective of the serious nature of the crime was required. The English situation indicated that the ecclesiastical courts were being used to defeat accusations of witchcraft as *malefice* through the counter-claim of slander. The ecclesiastical courts punished both the accused and the accuser and refrained from using theories of demonic heresy by concentrating on the defamation. Evidence for this counter-claim activity through the use of the church courts was established by Rushton¹²³ using the Church courts at Durham, Thompson¹²⁴ for the church courts in Devon and Ingram¹²⁵ for the church courts in Wiltshire. Wilson¹²⁶ extended the concept further, seeing the removal of ecclesiastical jurisdiction as forcing the political power of the clergy to rest on their credibility as far as the legitimate secular authority was concerned. The intellectual exclusivism of Christianity was, therefore, effectively used by the clergy and was a consequence of the close association between the church and the secular powers.

Evidence for Wales indicates that such exclusivism was not apparent. Slander, of whatever type, was viewed as a temporal concern because of the material damage accrued and, in consequence, could only be heard through a temporal proceeding. Before the Acts of Union, Welsh customary law regarded slander as a temporal crime and this was maintained after the Acts of Union. Added to this perception of slander was the Welsh belief that witchcraft activities were temporal acts and were a premeditated act of physical harming, of *malefice*. Welsh concepts such as these had little relationship to or commonality with the specific spiritual nature with which witchcraft as defamation was

¹²² Helena Kennedy, op. cit., p. 25.

¹²³ Peter Rushton, op. cit., p.116-132.

¹²⁴ Janet Thompson, op. cit., p. 81-101.

¹²⁵ Martin Ingram, op. cit., p. 2.

¹²⁶ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Sixth Edition, 1992 , p. 59.

treated in the early modern English courts.¹²⁷ Document evidence of witchcraft in Wales supports the view that people did not regard slander for witchcraft as a spiritual crime. Therefore, their response to witchcraft as slander was to deal with the issue using the social, judicial and legal structures with which order could be maintained. The lodgement of the case in the criminal courts reflected adherence to the customary Law of Women, the social and legal authority which had existed before the Acts of Union. Welsh people continued to use the precepts set by customary law but lodged the cases in courts of law which, ostensibly, were operating under English state authority.

Comparison with the County Palatinate of Durham is useful. Witchcraft cases brought under ecclesiastical law in the Church Courts of Durham from 1560-1675 revealed the types of people who were prosecuted and the number of slander cases with which the court dealt.¹²⁸ The question can be raised as to whether the church courts were being used as a means of defeating witchcraft accusations as a self-protective measure on the part of the individual so accused, especially considering the counter-claims for slander. The church courts punished both the accuser and the accused by means of penance and purgation before witnesses because the ecclesiastical courts considered that fault lay on both sides and, even though the cases were mostly concerned with different types of belief and the use of magic to cure illnesses, the church courts refrained from using more orthodox theories or demonic heresies in the investigations.¹²⁹ Welsh witchcraft as words cases however, began in the Courts of Great Sessions. These secular courts were used because the Welsh deemed slander to be a personal affront to their honour, social place and status, making it necessary for the slanderer to compensate the slandered for the loss of social status by paying money to reinstate the slandered person's place in the eyes of the community.¹³⁰

A comparison can be drawn with legal procedures for slander in the Netherlands. Witchcraft slander cases in the Dutch Republic continued well after the last execution for witchcraft. In the province of Holland, the last death sentence for witchcraft occurred in 1608 in Gorinchem and the last trial for witchcraft in 1659. In the intervening years, very few trials for witchcraft occurred although magistrates were "fairly regularly confronted with cases of slander or maltreatment in connection with witchcraft."¹³¹ Slander cases in the Netherlands were common, largely because the church courts encouraged both their own ministers and secular authorities to act against witch doctors, or cunning men, rather than

¹²⁷ See Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers Women, Words , and Sex in Early Modern London*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, especially Chapter 3 :The Language of Insult, p. 59-110 and Chapter 4: Words, Honour and Reputation, p. 111-138.

¹²⁸ Peter Rushton, op. cit., p.116.

¹²⁹ ibid., p.120-122.

¹³⁰ See R.R. Davies, " The Survival of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Wales." *History*, LIV, p. 338 - 357.

¹³¹ Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, " Witchcraft After The Witch-Trials." in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds) *Witchcraft And Magic in Europe Volume 5. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, The Athlone Press, London, 1999, p. 103.

against the person accused as a witch.¹³² Witch doctors went much further than Welsh conjurors who only implied who was responsible for a bewitchment. In the Netherlands, witch doctors named the witch and were thus creators of considerable communal disharmony. Those named could bring slander cases to clear their name although these were concentrated in church courts.¹³³

The procedure for slander cases in the Netherlands was very different from the Welsh procedure but there was a common motive, "A woman who simply let herself be labelled as a witch ran the risk of losing her life and property."¹³⁴ Her reputation was at stake and, even though almost no court in Holland would, after 1600, have considered a charge of witchcraft, the woman needed to take some action. Besides her loss of honour and reputation, labelling as a witch could eventuate in social isolation, necessitating action against anyone who was implying that she could undertake bewitchments. If the woman accused knew who her slanderer was, she could bring a slander charge and, if the identity of the slanderer was unknown, she could put herself to purgation. She could also resort to a maltreatment case if she had been intimidated into giving a blessing.¹³⁵

In Holland however, it was not necessary to undertake a full slander case in court as there were less expensive options: peacemaking. This was not infrequent in Haarlem. The slandered took the initiative by going to the burgomasters. These people undertook a resolution by ordering the parties to withdraw their accusations and keep the peace. Often, this was enough but, if innuendo continued, a formal slander charge could be lodged before the bench of aldermen. If this procedure also proved unsuccessful, and witchcraft accusations continued, the person who was responsible for the accusations could be compelled to publicly withdraw them. Sometimes a slanderer was banished from the court's jurisdiction. A slander trial proper was conducted by the municipal judges and this could eventuate in a formal judgement against the slanderer. Records of notaries public also contain declarations relating to witchcraft accusations, in the form of an attestation. The slanderer withdraws the accusation and the slandered woman is mentioned by name and given a notarised apology. The process was similar to that of

¹³² Willem de Blecourt and Frank Pereboom, "Insult and Admonition: Witchcraft in The Land of Vollenhove, Seventeenth Century.", in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the fourteenth to the twentieth century*, University Pers Rotterdam, Rotterdam, 1991, p. 120-122; Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, "Witchcraft Before Zeeland Magistrates and Church Councils, Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries.", in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), op. cit., p. 103- 108; G. J. Stronks, "The Significance of Balthasar Bekker's The Enchanted World." in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), op. cit., p. 150; Willem de Blecourt, "Four Centuries of Frisian Witch Doctors." in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), op. cit., p. 158-165.

¹³³ Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, "Witchcraft Before Zeeland Magistrates and Church Councils, Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries.", in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), op. cit., p. 108.

¹³⁴ Hans de Waardt, "Prosecution or Defense: Procedural Possibilities Following A Witchcraft Accusation in the Province of Holland Before 1800.", in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), op. cit., p. 84.

¹³⁵ ibid., p. 84.

peacemaking and, if accusations continued thereafter, this attestation could be used in a formal slander complaint. Attestations could also take the form of a sworn deposition. Using this method, the woman recorded the third parties who had witnessed the accusation or enforced spell removal. "It is possible that in cases like these a formal charge had already been made or was at least under consideration."¹³⁶ Another option was through members of the Reformed Church who could also serve as a forum in which members could seek to restore their good name. This occurred in Amsterdam where the church council, until the late seventeenth century, handled complaints related to slurs made by congregation members.¹³⁷

Witchcraft as words cases appeared in the Courts of Great Sessions records from 1604 for Denbigh until 1754 for Caernarvon. The cases were concentrated in the Chester and Carmarthen Circuits, the majority of the cases were for Denbigh, Flint and Montgomery whilst Pembroke had the most cases for the Carmarthen Circuit. Cases for the Quarter Sessions records occurred in 1690 for Brecon, 1730 for Glamorgan, and 1783 for Pembroke. Welsh slander cases did not involve actual physical harm. None of the cases mentioned any form of physical violence, whether on the part of the slanderer or of the slandered.¹³⁸ The harming always took the form of verbal abuse and had to have occurred before witnesses in a public place before it could be recognised as an offence in court. The motives for the verbal abuse of the slanderer of witchcraft can only be guessed at although the slanderer must have felt very sure of their facts because he or she was undertaking the almost certain risk of a legal action by the very public nature of the verbal abuse. "It is clear from many slanderous allegations that they were threats to prosecute"¹³⁹ and were a verbal accusation which encompassed a challenge to the suspect to clear herself if she could.¹⁴⁰

The majority of the witchcraft slander cases for early modern Wales were concerned with the slander of an individual for being a witch or for indulging in witchcraft activities. Only a few cite witchcraft in conjunction with other types of slander, usually of a sexual nature or which implied that the woman was a drunk, usually after the witchcraft aspect of the slander had already been stated. In most cases, the witch slander is cited first, rarely after another form of slander was cited.¹⁴¹ This underlines the perceived importance of witchcraft in the form of a verbal insult to the character and reputation of the woman

¹³⁶ ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁷ ibid., p. 86.

¹³⁸ Witchcraft as *malefice* cases do cite actual physical violence, usually in the form of "blooding the witch."

¹³⁹ R.F. Suggett, "Slander...." op. cit., p.148.

¹⁴⁰ The thesis is concerned only with witchcraft in early modern Wales. Hundreds of cases recorded in Richard Suggett's work provide considerable detail about slanders and the types of slander which eventuated in the communities but cases which do not concern witchcraft were outside the scope of this thesis.

¹⁴¹ See Introduction Witchcraft as Words Cases: Summary of Court Circuits above.

concerned.

It is clear that the Courts of Great Sessions were used as a means whereby personal honour and social place and status for the woman could be regained. The new court system was used as the means of continuing Welsh customary law. According to the customary Law of Women, all that needed to be proved was that a slander had occurred and, despite the English administrative and judicial system, the Welsh courts continued to acknowledge the old customary laws, particularly those pertaining to *sarhaed*. Initially, none of the witchcraft as words cases in the Courts of Great Sessions led to a charge the crime of witchcraft as *malefice* in early modern Wales, a significant aspect of Welsh witchcraft. Cases of witchcraft as slander were lodged in the criminal court system, the majority under a legal code which, after 1604, stated that all activities which could be related to witchcraft should be tried as a felony, and yet the Welsh cases remained in the form of slander.

The Welsh slander and defamation cases are the only court records in which a woman was specifically called a witch. The word "witch" was used often and was recorded in the testimony but this rarely occurred in the records of witchcraft as *malefice* cases. Continuation of the concepts inherent within the Law of Women meant survival for the Welsh witch in the early modern period and the nature of this pre-existing customary law was of inestimable importance when witchcraft and Welsh women were linked in the Courts of Great Sessions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Chapter VI

Personal Protection, The First Phase of the Welsh Antidote to Witchcraft as *Malefice*.

Customary law was not, however, as significant in witchcraft as *malefice* cases as these were reflective of customary practices, the traditional mechanisms which Welsh people used in response to the *malefice* of the witch. The number of cases of witchcraft as *malefice* in the Courts of Great Sessions are relatively few and do not reflect the practices of popular culture in early modern Wales. In all the counties for which records survive, court transcripts give every indication that accusers had already undertaken a set pattern of behavioural responses to the *malefice* from which they felt threatened or from which they were already suffering. Evidence highlights the possibility that there may have been another explanation for the small number of witchcraft as *malefice* cases as records indicate that there were two types or phases of responses which the Welsh used as an antidote to witchcraft as *malefice*.

The first response was the personal one where an individual took the responsibility of solving the problem personally. The second was communal, where a *malefice* sufferer handed the problem to another, for a fee, who undertook to restore harmony on the sufferer's behalf. The communal phase involved consultation with the conjuror.¹ Evidence shows that it was only when these behavioural responses had been unsuccessful that the sufferer eventually resorted to lodgement of a case against the person they felt was responsible for the *malefice*. The court cases can be regarded as a third and final phase in the antidote response process. Unlike the situation in Essex, for example, where the historian is "dealing with activities which have left only a marginal trace in the surviving records", Welsh witchcraft cases contain a considerable amount of detail. Comparatively speaking, transcriptions from Wales provide a very precise picture of the events which preceded the lodgement of a witchcraft as *malefice* case in the courts.²

Welsh women before the courts accused of witchcraft did not deny their guilt, they acknowledged that they had been responsible for the harm that they had caused. This is an important divergence from the responses of individuals so accused in England, Scotland and on the Continent.³ One inference is that the motivation for bringing such a case in Wales was not directly associated with the accusers wishing for a result such as imprisonment or execution. Moreover, the accused was very aware of the exact reason

¹ The communal phase is examined in the next chapter, Chapter VII Communal Protection, The Second Phase of the Welsh Antidote to Witchcraft as *Malefice*.

² Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England A regional and comparative study*, Routledge and kegan Paul, London, 1970 pp. 104, 120.

³ See Christina Larner, *The Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1981. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, Penguin Books, New York, 1996. Lyndal Roper, "Early modern Germany," in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts, (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe Studies in Culture and belief*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 207-236.

why she was in court. The motivation for the Welsh court case was very precise: to make the witch acknowledge the harm she had done, because acknowledgement of guilt by the witch was the only way that reconciliation could be achieved. Without reconciliation, a cessation of the effects of *malefice* could not occur and it was cessation which was the most important aspect of the Welsh situation. Achieving reconciliation as a prelude to cessation was the process which formed the basis of the Welsh people's response to witches in their communities.⁴

Welsh society recognised that the witch was capable of harming another but the witch was also regarded as an accepted member of the village community and was not marginalised. Such an inference is drawn from the cases which show that the degree of fear, the element so often associated with accusation, is not evident in Wales. Evidence suggests that Welsh people concentrated their efforts on protecting themselves and also on curtailing the extent of the harm the witch might inflict. Welsh cases differ substantially in a key area of the relationship between the victim and the witch because the onus was on the victim to reconcile with the witch. Only by this means could reconciliation occur, after which, the *malefice* ceased. This is why customary law, popular beliefs and customary practices in Wales were so important as the "pre-trial experience" of English⁵ and Scottish witches is not the norm in Wales.⁶ Overall, most potential *malefice* witchcraft cases were resolved before court was considered as an option in Wales, largely because the dependency on customary practices enabled the victim to resolve the *malefice* by reconciling with the witch, making trials unnecessary.

The Welsh evidence does not support what has become a significant facet of witchcraft historiography: the notion of witchcraft as power.⁷ It was the power which people attributed to witches which both generated and sustained the fear people had of them. Fear gave the witch added power, enabling the use of that fear to further increase power in what became a cycle of escalating fear/power/more fear which eventuated in

⁴ The difficulties some communities faced in achieving reconciliation in any form becomes very apparent in the cases of possession, particularly when the possessed are young people. J. A. Sharpe, "Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household : Age, Authority , and Possessed Young People." in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds) ,*The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, St. Martin's Press, Inc., New York, p. 187- 212. Other societal responses to witches is shown in Bengt Ankarloo, "Sweden: The Mass Burnings (1668-1676)." in B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (eds) *Early Modern Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, Oxford University Press, Clarendon, 1999, p. 285-318; H.C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch-Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1972, p. 140; R. Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, especially Chapter 6 : The Rape of a Whole Colony; The 1692 Witch Hunt, for Salem.

⁵ Malcolm Gaskill, " Witches and Witnesses in Old and New England.", in Stuart Clark (ed), *Languages of Witchcraft Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, Macmillan Press, Ltd., Hounds-mill, 2001, p. 55 - 80.

⁶ The reasons for this were examined in Chapter I Contextualising the Welsh Witch in the Early Modern World, Witchcraft Historiography.

⁷ James Sharpe *Instruments of Darkness Witchcraft in England 1550-1750*, Penguin, London,1997, p.150.

the English response to the witch, which "was to accuse him or her before a court of law."⁸ Welsh witchcraft as *malefice* case studies did not reflect this fear/ power connection,⁹ indicating rather that all participants viewed the situation in terms of inter-personal disharmony which could be resolved with sufficient effort. The primary concern was restoration of harmony and, to achieve this, all parties had to work towards rectifying the problem since no one party was to blame. The Welsh response to the *malefice* of the witch was, therefore, couched more in terms of traditional forms of maintaining inter-personal harmony, much in the same way as customary law, the Law of Women, generated equitable outcomes in the Courts of Great Sessions.

The crucial point in the Welsh witchcraft cases is that bringing a person to court for *malefice* witchcraft did not solve the problem unless the witch admitted her guilt. Execution or any other punishment was not going to alleviate the problem of either bewitchment or inter-personal disharmony. The sufferer and his/her relatives would still be left without a resolution because the purpose of the entire process in Wales was acknowledgement of the wrong done to the other by both the witch and the victim. Accused witches were brought to court in Wales only after they had refused to participate in the process of acknowledgement leading to conciliation which would generate a resolution of the dispute to the satisfaction of both parties.

Malefice court cases in Wales were, therefore, about making the witch begin the process by which harmony could be restored. Two other Welsh customary legal mechanisms parallel the case lodgement process for witchcraft as *malefice* cases: bloodfeud¹⁰ and arbitration.¹¹ Other societies also show similarities between the Welsh customary reaction to *malefice* witchcraft, particularly in relation to pre-existing traditional practices in the bloodfeud. Iceland has social and legal structures which closely resemble those of

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.155.

⁹ Fear as a powerful force in early modern society is the subject of William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (eds) publication *Fear in early modern society*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997. Witchcraft is dealt with specifically by P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, "The fear of the King is death: James VI and the witches of East Lothian.", p. 209-225.

¹⁰ The Welsh system of the bloodfeud resolution process for the death/injury of another through acknowledgement and reconciliation achieved by arbitration and financial compensation. See R.R. Davies, "The Survival of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Wales." *History*, LIV, 1969, p. 338-357 for a discussion of the compensation treaty payments and agreements concerning the paying out of blood debt by the slayers kin, all with the emphasis on preventing inter-kin feud and its potential for communal disharmony. Bloodfeud has been discussed in Chapter III The Customary Law of Women : Social Place and Cultural Status.

¹¹ Arbitration was the means used for settling disputes which reflected the Welsh tendency to emphasise reconciliation between parties rather than concentrate on punishment. See Llinos Beverley-Smith, "Disputes and Settlements in Medieval Wales: The Role of Arbitration." *English Historical Review*, No. CCCCXXI, October 1991, p. 836-860 for a discussion of arbitration as a common way of settling disputes by the Elizabethan period in Wales. Arbitration has been discussed in Chapter V Witchcraft as Words: Slander and Defamation Case Studies.

early modern Wales and have been examined by Harstrup¹² and Bycock.¹³

In other words, witchcraft as *malefice* cases in Wales did not follow a format dictated by judicial, legal, religious or political criteria, the cases followed the principle which demanded acknowledgement of guilt to achieve a resolution which enabled the restoration of inter-personal and communal harmony. This helps to explain why executions and punishment for those accused and found guilty in Wales were almost non-existent and why witchcraft as *malefice* case numbers were so few. Comparing the witchcraft situation in Wales with witch trials, cases and outcomes elsewhere in England, France and Denmark, adds weight to this concept of non-conformity.¹⁴ The trend is

¹² Kirsten Hastrup, "Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism." in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds) *Early Modern Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, Oxford University Press, Clarendon, 1990., pp. 385, 387-392, 394-398. Towns and villages did not exist in Iceland as all the population lived in scattered farmsteads. Witch trials occurred in north-west Iceland in 1625, 1654-56, 1667, 1669-1685 but legal protection mechanisms existed in Iceland which provided a check concerning the development of a witch hunt. The institution was known as judgement by twelve lay persons and, by using this method, the accused could have all charges dropped if he/she could find twelve lay persons to swear to his/her innocence. The Icelandic institution was a variant of compurgation, an essential element in ecclesiastical courts throughout Europe and England. The introduction of Danish law in 1630 and the Lutheran faith made demonology elitist as the popular culture base was more shamanistic and had no concepts of covens, Sabbats or female witches. Witches in Iceland were male.

¹³ Jesse L. Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, Penguin Books, London, 2001. Byock examines the systems of power : legislative, judicial, friendships, family networks, advocacy and the law in relation to maintaining harmony in a community which was subjected to blood feuds, feuds and vendetta in the tenth to thirteenth century. Encompassing the Christianising process of Iceland, bishops and the secular authority, Byock's work lends weight to that of Harstrup's, analysing the system of compromises, conflict management and arbitration of which the community availed itself, preventing outbreaks of mass violence.

¹⁴ According to Sharpe, witchcraft cases outside Essex and Kent, did not figure prominently in prosecutions and cites the witchcraft case numbers for sessions in counties other than Essex and Kent: those from the Middlesex Sessions from 1550-1625 was 21, Sussex Assizes 1559-1625 was 16, Hertfordshire Assizes 1559-1625 was 41, Cheshire Court of Great Sessions 1580-1709 was 34, Essex Assizes 1620-1680 was 101, Devon Assizes 1700-1709 was 1, Cornwall Assizes 1700-1749 was 0, Norfolk and Suffolk Assizes 1734-1731 was 0. These figures remain relatively unchanged in his later publication. See J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, Longman, London, 1984, p. 54-55. J.A. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness Witchcraft in England 1550-1750*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1997 edition. Similarly for France, in Paris, from 1564 - 1640, witchcraft appeals to the Parlement of Paris totalled 1123. Of these, 115 were executed, 130 underwent corporal punishment, 395 underwent non-corporal punishment, 52 died in prison, 24 outcomes were unknown and 407 people were released. See Alfred Soman, "The Parlement of Paris and the Great Witch Hunt (1565-1640).", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 2, 1978, p. 31- 44, at p. 35. In Denmark, Henningsen, estimated that between 1559 and 1565, those accused numbered between one and two thousand and acquittals were as numerous as sentences. After 1576, all sorcery cases had to be referred for appeal to the Landsting and court rolls of the Jutland High Court showed that judges imposed minor sentences compared with the sentences handed down by local courts. Of 225 people sentenced to burn at the stake, 114 were acquitted. Only 10% of those suspected as witches were men, and two-thirds of the women were old, i.e. over fifty. Only 6% were unmarried, most were married or widowed. On average, only ten cases a year were held despite the fact that every town and village was thought to have its witches. See Gustav Henningsen, "Witchcraft in Denmark.", *Folklore*, Vol. 93:ii, 1982, p. 131-137.

continued in Europe and Scotland.¹⁵

Welsh people depended a great deal on the counter-magical measures which they could use in order to elicit an acknowledgement of guilt from the witch. Welsh court cases provide substantial information concerning what these measures were. Recourse to such measures could almost be considered endemic as every court case provides evidence of what the accusers attempted to do in an effort to make the witch acknowledge her guilt. It was their inability to achieve such an outcome which resulted in the court case. The few witchcraft as *malefice* court cases may indicate that the efficacy of the Welsh counter-magical measures were so successful that redress to court was rarely necessary.

Through the restoration of inter-personal harmony, both the witch and the victim resolved the problem and the imbalance of their social relationship was rectified. Both parties in the dispute appear to have equal power in the situation, as the perception of shared responsibility for the *malefice* problem is evidenced in transcripts. Blame, from a traditional perspective in Wales, was shared because one party was responsible for the action and the other party was responsible for resolving the outcome of that action.¹⁶ Without co-operation and resolution, a dispute could become ongoing and very detrimental to communal harmony. Dependence on social mechanisms which were effective in resolving a problem, whether it was between two individuals or several, tended to negate the need for court cases.

Most witchcraft as *malefice* cases in early modern Wales, as elsewhere in Europe, provide evidence showing that the *malefice* of the witch was a response to provocation. What is unusual however, is the Welsh emphasis on establishing the reason for the witch's action. Essentially, ascertaining the reason further assisted the resolution process because the motive for the *malefice* was established, allowing an agreement to be reached between the two parties concerned. For example, Anne Ellis of Penley in

¹⁵ For Guernsey, Stephen Dewar, "Witchcraft and the Evil Eye in Guernsey." *Guernsey Historical Monograph*, No. 3, 1968, p. 3-12, found 103 cases which came to trial and noted that when the bailiff was a native of Guernsey, fewer trials occurred. However, when an Englishman was the bailiff, as was Thomas Compton, more trials occurred and the largest number of trials occurred when a Jerseyman, Amias de Cartaret, was the bailiff. During his tenure, 1601-1631, seventy-seven trials with thirty-four convictions and twenty-three banishments eventuated. T.P. Vukanovic, "Witchcraft in the Central Balkans I: Characteristics of Witches.", *Folklore*, Vol. 100: i, 1989, p. 9-24, established that twenty-eight trials occurred in Zagreb between 1640 and 1752; all were women between the ages of twenty and eighty and all were chained, tortured and burnt at the stake. Gabor Klaniczay, "Hungary: The Accusations and the Universe of Popular Magic." in B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (eds), op. cit., p. 219-220, showed that witch trials in Hungary were ongoing from 1520 to 1777. Most of the 1,482 cases concerned women of whom 412 were executed, 213 were acquitted and 199 received a lesser punishment, corporal, banishment or a fine. Christina Larner, *The Enemies of God...*, op. cit., p. 61 provides a statistical chart of the pattern of witch-hunts.

¹⁶ See R.R. Davies, "The Survival of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Wales." *History*, LIV, 1969, p. 338-357, for an examination of concepts of responsibility in relation to restoration of communal and inter-personal harmony.

Flintshire was considered by her community to have been responsible for laming Richard Hughes more than eight years before her case came to court. When asked why she had done it, Anne responded by asking "*Why did he pissee downe her chimley?*"(sic).¹⁷ In another case, the behaviour of William ap Griffith/Gruffyd ap William, a bailiff of Denbigh, and his party towards Gwen verch Ellis when they appeared at her house and demanded drink for all, was socially inexcusable behaviour. The ill effects of such behaviour, ostensibly the broken arm Robert Evans claimed he suffered at her house, were attributed to the rudeness of the party.¹⁸ Nearly every witchcraft as *malefice* case for early modern Wales contains information which initially positions the witch as the wronged party.

The response of the Welsh witch was, from this viewpoint, reactive: she responded to another's action against her by using *malefice*.¹⁹ No case evidence has been located in the Welsh records where it can be shown that the witch was acting only out of motiveless, spite. Instead, cases show that the witch and her victim were expected, in the majority of *malefice* incidents, to undertake conciliatory actions which resolved the crisis. The emphasis in Wales was on the recognition and endeavour made by both parties in the dispute, meaning that the position of the witch was on a par with that of the victim. The power relationship tended to be equal rather than favourable to the victim of *malefice*.

Just as the witch had to acknowledge her guilt, so the recipient of the *malefice* had to acknowledge the action which precipitated the *malefice*. It was this acknowledgement of personal responsibility on the part of the *malefice* sufferer which seems to be a specific characteristic of witchcraft cases in Wales. The problem of bewitchment was approached from a similar perspective in England, where "The object of other confrontations or meetings between the witch and her supposed victims was either to establish proof or attempt to effect a reconciliation."²⁰ The same applied in Wales although the court evidence suggests that the Welsh people both depended upon a resolution and made considerably more effort to achieve one. While other communities had reasons for suspecting a person as a witch, they were not prepared to openly acknowledge that the witch's action may have been in response to something done or not done by them.²¹ Welsh victims went further as they accepted responsibility, whether full or partial, for their actions and attempted to make amends for the initial wrong meted out to the witch. In Wales, people were prepared to recognise that the *malefice* of the witch should be

¹⁷ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/6/f.17. (1657) Sessions for Flint at Flint 28 September 1657. The Examination of Elizabeth Jeffreys of Penley. NLW Flintshire Gaol Files.

¹⁸ NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/12-13 Denbigh Gaol Files (1594) Great Sessions for Denbigh 36 Elizabeth.

¹⁹ November, 2001.

²⁰ James Sharpe, *Instruments of...* op. cit., p.160.

²¹ That is, the guilt was firmly placed at the witch's door, not that of the victim in terms of trial outcomes and apportioning of guilt. See footnotes 13 -17 above.

viewed more as a reasonable response to harm done to her. The emphasis in Wales was not so much on the result of the bewitchment, which construed the witch as the cause, but on the reason for the bewitchment. Only by understanding the motive might a resolution be achieved.

The crucial aspect of the entire situation was the necessity to deal with the problem in order to bring about the cessation of the effects of the *malefice*. The methods which people used in their dealings with the witch and the effects of the witch's actions were all directed towards one objective : cessation of the *malefice*. In witchcraft as *malefice* cases for Wales, the emphasis is placed on this one very important aspect and the victims concentrate on achieving this outcome. Through the use of customary protective mechanisms, people in Wales sought to achieve resolution with the witch and restore inter-personal harmony once the effects of the *malefice* had been discontinued.

Reconciliation was, therefore, the first aim of the sufferer, and the strategies an individual chose to reconcile between the parties were taken from a familiar catalogue of customary practices. Using these devices, the individual brought about a reconciliation with the witch, who then lifted the *malefice* by a hands on or verbal blessing. At this juncture, such a personal response reaction was a very long way from lodging a court case against the witch for *malefice* activities.

The concept of personal responsibility for the initial harm done by an individual to the witch was deeply rooted, as the witchcraft as *malefice* case studies will show.²² It is, however, the dependence upon and constant use of a limited range of customary practice devices which sets the Welsh response to witches apart from the more general response to people so accused in England and elsewhere. Thomas²³ instanced the use of such forms of counter-witchcraft as herbs, the use of witch-bottles, cutting off and burning the suspect's hair, burning thatch off the witch's roof, burning one of the bewitched animals, making a wax image and sticking pins in it, "scratching" or bleeding the witch, beating the witch or, as in one case he cites, putting a knife in the witch's buttock.²⁴ These represent wide-ranging and localised responses to witchcraft which are far more varied than traditional Welsh practices.

Macfarlane has defined three informal stages of counter-actions to witchcraft in early modern England: taking precautions before the witch attacked to safeguard the possible victim, seeking cures once witchcraft was thought to have been used, and forcing the

²² See Chapter VIII Witchcraft as *Malefice* : Witchcraft Case Studies, The Third Phase of The Welsh Antidote to Witchcraft.

²³ Keith Thomas, *Religion and The Decline of Magic*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1991, p. 648-649.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

witch to withdraw her actions or be punished.²⁵ This third stage is where Wales differs because the objective was the cessation of the effects of the *malefice*, not punishment. The Essex response to bewitchment was similar to that in Wales as the advice was to deal with it by private action or consultation with an expert. However, most importantly in Essex, as in Wales, people "required knowledge of who was the likely culprit," and the bewitched had to be certain who was responsible for the bewitchment and find the name of the witch. Macfarlane then argues that a previously hidden tension now became an open breech and involved all community members as the hostility of the actions against the suspected witch advertised the problem. Therefore, the suspect was taken to court, especially if the victim died. The long term effect was, that in order to achieve healing or cessation, the witch could be executed. When the cases came to the courts it meant that the informal solutions had failed and that nothing less than the death or complete confession and reconciliation of the suspect were acceptable.²⁶ Thomas also reiterates this notion... "But the best cure of all was to have the witch prosecuted and executed."²⁷ The evidence for Wales, however, suggests that cessation was the primary aim of the court case and that execution was not the required outcome. This is substantiated by the results of witchcraft as *malefice* cases in Wales as all those who confessed to their guilt were released. In Wales, the death of the witch would not achieve the reconciliation which was necessary if inter-personal harmony was to be restored.

Wales was like other parts of Europe in that a variety of counter-witchcraft strategies were used. Briggs examined the counter-magical responses in Lorraine as a component of the wider European context and instanced the powders, provided by the devil or made by the witches themselves, which were used as healing agents.²⁸ The presence of the witch, gifts of food and drink, taking items from the witch, could all counteract bewitchment. Summoning the witch "by threats or blandishments, in an attempt to obtain a cure"²⁹ also occurred but the degree of violence which seems to have been a large aspect of witch/victim relations in Lorraine is not evident in Wales. The only case in which violence seems to have been expected, at least by the accused witch's husband, was that of Katherine Rees.³⁰ Violence is not a significant aspect of any witchcraft case in

²⁵ Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England A regional and comparative study*, Routledge and kegan Paul, London, 1970; p. 103-109.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁷ Keith Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 650.

²⁸ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1996, pp. 111, 117-119. and Robin Briggs, "Circling the Devil: Witch-Doctors and magical Healers in Early Modern Lorraine.", in Stuart Clark (ed), *Languages of Witchcraft Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, Macmillan Press, Ltd., Houndsill, 2001, p. 161-178.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁰ NLW, Great Sessions 4/886/15. The case of K(C)atherine Rees for the County of Cardigan. Throughout the testimonies her name was spelt with a "C" although the initial examination statement referred to her as "Katherine." See historians also refer to her as Katherine Bowen as that was her husband's name but Katherine herself uses the surname "Rees".

early modern Wales, other than the scratching/blooding of the witch, but this was never more than the words imply.

With regard to Scotland, Larner concurs with the general European views concerning counter measures against witchcraft.³¹ Where Scottish counter-measures differ however, is in the introduction of the “new popular demonic”, essentially making the witch the enemy of God by associating all aspects of witchcraft with the devil.³² In Scotland, this made even the counter-agents of healers and blessers “themselves witches and in league with the Devil.”³³ Larner continues the theme in *Witchcraft and Religion*³⁴ but with the emphasis on reconciliation with the witch. The emphasis is, once again, very different to the Welsh concept of reconciliation. In Scotland, the victim could ask the witch directly, or ask another “stronger” witch, the identity of the bewitcher and how to induce a cure. The Scottish witch either refused to lift the bewitchment or made “a semi-formal response which at once both acknowledges her witchcraft (hence the value of these accusations in courts of law) and at the same time relieves the victim of its effects.”³⁵ Alternatively, the victim could resort to aggressive counter-measures in direct opposition to the dictates of the church.³⁶ In Wales, the demonic link is not evident.

De Blecourt emphasises the importance of differentiating between two cultural responses in the victim/witch and counter-magical issues in Europe. “With regard to counter-witchcraft, the distinction is between the belief that witches were capable of lifting their own spells but not those of others, and the broader rituals performed by the witch-doctor.”³⁷ Reiterating Larner’s comments, he shows that the maleficient witch was easy to identify because she lifted her *malefice*.³⁸ Welsh cases also reflect the belief that witches lifted their own *malefice*. However, there is an important difference. The Welsh witch could lift her own *malefice* but she could not lift another’s and nor could the conjuror. The conjuror could only identify the witch, not cure the *malefice*. This lends added weight to the importance of *malefice* case outcomes in Wales because, if resolution could only be achieved through a court case because the court case would elicit an admission of guilt, no further action was necessary because inter-personal harmony had been achieved.

The Welsh concept of reconciliation took the onus of responsibility away from the witch

31 Christina Larner, *Enemies of God The Witch-hunt in Scotland*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1981, p. 144

32 ibid., p. 144-145, quote from p. 144.

33 ibid., p. 170-171.

34 Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion The Politics of Popular Belief*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984. This work was published under the editorship of Alan Macfarlane after the death of Christina Larner in 1983 and, in many areas, reflects his rather than her developed concepts.

35 ibid., p. 132.

36 ibid., p. 134.

37 Willem de Blecourt, op. cit. p. 297.

38 ibid., p. 297.

and placed it firmly on the shoulders of an individual who had no magical powers but had to rely on the strategies provided by the customary protective mechanisms. Such strategies provided a bulwark against harmful magical activity and gave the ordinary person the means with which to deal with the results of such activity. The witch had empowered herself in the eyes of the community by inflicting *malefice*, now it was up to the *malefice* sufferer to re-empower him/herself in the eyes of the community by resolving the effects of the *malefice*. In this way, inter-personal harmony could be restored in a process which seems to have been so successful that only a small number of witchcraft as *malefice* cases were eventually lodged in the Courts of Great Sessions.

Personalised procedural responses offered an opportunity to counteract the *malefice* of the witch. If the sufferer decided to use this first phase of the antidotes to witchcraft and resolve the problem personally, a certain procedure had to be followed before counter-magical activity began. In the first place, it was important to discover who was actually responsible for the *malefice*. Although the victim might have had a very good idea of who was responsible, the use of some of the protective devices required certainty before the victim could proceed: the victim had to confront the witch, detailing the symptoms associated with the suspected bewitchment. The confrontation was face to face, since the victim was asking for confirmation from the witch that she was personally responsible for the *malefice*. Having ascertained the source, the victim could then proceed, using whichever protective device he or she chose.

Evidence which details the efforts made by the victim to appease the witch by undertaking a reconciliation process to solve the dispute is provided in witchcraft as *malefice* cases lodged in the Courts of Great Sessions. On the 3 June 1657, Elizabeth Jeffreys of Penley in Flintshire provided considerable information to establish the facts behind bewitchment, confrontation, reasons for the *malefice*, and personal attempts made to achieve reconciliation and resolution. Elizabeth was giving evidence against Anne Ellis, also of Penley, who was charged with witchcraft practices. Elizabeth had had a daughter who was very ill and she thought that Anne Ellis might have been responsible because Anne had harmed another child, the son of Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Jeffreys went to Anne and asked her to come and see the sick child. Anne did so, blessed her and the child recovered. However, the child became sick again and told her mother that it was always so after she had had an argument with Anne. For some reason Elizabeth did not ask Anne for another blessing and the child died. This does not, however, imply that the child would have recovered if Elizabeth had asked Anne to bless her again. What becomes important is why Elizabeth did not ask her, since the blessing had worked previously. The relationship between the two women was complicated as Anne lived, some of the time, in the same house as Elizabeth and evidence indicates that Elizabeth went to considerable effort on behalf of others who felt

that their problems might be related to Anne's actions.³⁹

Elizabeth further testified that William Hughes' daughter Margaret, accompanied by other children, had gone to Anne's house and eaten some bread in Anne's absence. Anne was very annoyed and, shortly after this, Margaret became ill and Elizabeth, fearful for the child, went to Anne and brought her to Margaret's bedside. Anne blessed the child and Margaret recovered.⁴⁰ In each instance, Elizabeth had gone to Anne and asked her for a blessing on the child concerned, the blessing was given and the child recovered. It was only when Elizabeth had refrained from asking for another blessing for her own child who subsequently died, and because she thought Anne was responsible for the death, that she had joined others in testifying against Anne in court. Elizabeth was, however, the same woman who assisted Anne in her escape from gaol.

Another example of procedures used by individuals to empower themselves against the *malefice* of a witch concerned a woman named Olly Powell. Olly lived in Pembrokeshire in the 1690s and had a reputation for practising witchcraft in her community. The labourers at Jefferston coalworks in Pembrokeshire were very afraid of Olly Powell because she muttered curses directed at those persons who refused to give her either food or coal. Eventually Olly went too far in her *malefice* activities and was confronted by one of her victims in the field at harvest time. He forced her to her knees and made her say "God bless you", after which "he was perfectly well to the admiration of all present."⁴¹

The witch also had options when she was confronted as she could either admit that she was responsible or she could deny her responsibility. If the witch conceded that she was responsible, the sufferer then asked her to lift the bewitchment through a hands-on or verbal blessing and the situation was usually resolved. Resolution, however, only occurred when the witch, as the original victim, had had an opportunity to state why she

³⁹ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/6/f.17 Flintshire Gaol Files. All the information pertaining to the social relationship and the interaction between the witnesses and Anne can be found only in the court transcripts. The details are not sufficient to provide any illumination on the reasons for either woman's behaviour and, unlike the examination of Margaret Knowlsey (Steve Hindle, "The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley : gossip, gender and the experience of authority in early modern England.", *Continuity and Change*, 9, 3, 1994, p. 391- 419, at p. 392-3.) , it is almost impossible to contextualise the Elizabeth/Anne relationship as a microhistory. This is unfortunate because communal reactions to Anne were very varied - whilst there were witnesses against her and she was found guilty, the goaler and Elizabeth encouraged Anne to escape from gaol and provided the means for her to do this. Anne fled to Wrenbury in Cheshire but was persuaded to return to Flint where the verdict of guilty was brought in. Anne was not punished or executed for her *malefice* activities, further highlighting the importance of understanding the dimensions within the inter-personal relationships evidenced in this, as in all Welsh cases.

⁴⁰ NLW , Great Sessions 4/985/6/f.17 Flintshire Gaol Files.

⁴¹ Bodleian Library MS: Ashmole1815 f.r-v. Letter written in February 1693/4 by John Edwards, then a justice of the peace for Pemroke to Alexander Forde, his Archdeacon then at Jesus College. The letter details the case of Olly Powell, information which cannot be located in the Courts of Great Sessions for Wales because those for these years for Glamorgan are no longer extant.

had subjected the victim to maleficent damage and the victim acknowledged that he or she had committed a wrong towards the witch. The victim of the *malefice* also had to undertake to provide restitution for the wrong done to the witch. The witch lifted her *malefice* only after restitution had been forthcoming. Restitution could take many forms: the *malefice* sufferer could apologise, give the witch a gift of food, often something similar to that which she had been refused, or undertake not to offend the witch again. Whatever its nature, the type of restitution was agreed between the two parties. As long as agreement was reached to the satisfaction of both parties and the *malefice* ceased, the problem was regarded as solved.

Sometimes the witch refused to lift the bewitchment for reasons associated with the lack of recognition given to the witch and the reason why she had inflicted the *malefice* on the sufferer. Those few instances where the victim was refused, either evolved into the next antidote phase, the communal, and, if that was unsuccessful, the victim took the witch to court in the third and final antidote phase. The witchcraft as *malefice* court cases show that the case was in court because the parties had been unable to resolve their difficulties and reconciliation and resolution had not been achieved. This meant that *malefice* cessation had not eventuated and court was the final option remaining to obtain cessation.

In the testimony against Gwen verch Ellis, Ellen verch Richard's grievance was irresolvable because her son, whom she claimed Gwen had bewitched, had died.⁴² Lyckie verch John, another witness in the case, stated very plainly that she had told Ellen, when her son first became ill, to go and ask Gwen to come and bless him as he was demented because Gwen was punishing him for having struck her. Lyckie made a very astute point as to how the customary practices worked, saying that Ellen had waited too long to ask for the blessing, Lyckie even going so far as to visit Gwen herself to ask her to bless Ellen's son Lewis ap John.⁴³ Lyckie's words implied that, in reality, Ellen had brought her grief upon herself since she had initially refused to ask for the blessing. When Ellen eventually went to Gwen to ask,

and the said Gwen
said it was too late and if she had come sooner
in time she could and would have helpen him
saying further that this deponents said son
should live untill a certain day within a
month or two there next following as this deponent
now remembereth and this deponent saith and certainly
remembereth that her said son departed this life the
very day that the said Gwen had appointed
and told this deponent. Further this deponent saith
that long before the death of her said son Lyckie
the wife of William ap Griffith ap Hugh told this deponent that
the forsaid Gwen verch Ellis had caused this deponents said
son to become mad in revenge of the injury that he had

⁴² NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/ 13-14 (1594).

⁴³ NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/4/14.

done to her, and that she could, if she liked –
him again and thereupon this deponent went, as before
she hath depos'd, unto the said Gwen for helpe unto
her son.⁴⁴

Motivational reasons for *malefice* implementation varied but were usually associated with a lack of neighbourliness towards the witch although the Welsh witch had a habit of making the reason plain to the victim by directing her *malefice* towards the item she had been refused, such as butter, milk, piglets, bread.⁴⁵

The use of personal protective mechanisms came into play when the witch refused to lift the bewitchment or when an individual wanted to protect him or herself from possible bewitchment activities, probably because they had a guilty conscience or were afraid they may have unintentionally offended the witch. The point was that people could effect a resolution personally by following other options which would enable them to overcome the bewitchment and counteract the *malefice* of the witch. Welsh popular culture exhibited a toleration towards these women that few other societies accorded their womenfolk and this toleration extended to the accused witch even when she was proved guilty of *malefice* activities in court. Welsh women accused of witchcraft usually survived, their cases dismissed, declared "ignoramus" or they were released after a petition by prominent men was lodged in their favour, requesting that the woman be released without charge.

Specific personalised procedural responses, designed to counteract the *malefice* of the witch, were mentioned in court transcripts but there were many other procedures used as antidotes which were not mentioned. Cases record only the witness statements with very little information from the woman charged with witchcraft as *malefice* existed in these records. The *malefice* sufferer, having established the actual identity of the witch who had implemented *malefice*, and having decided to take full personal responsibility for counteracting the activities of the witch, then opted to use one of the traditional customary protective devices available.

The option was a matter of personal choice. A selection of personal protective devices was available to anyone who found themselves, their family or their livestock in such a position. Societies have evolved many devices for self-empowerment and protection, among those used were holed stones, horse shoes, certain plants carried in the pocket, precise ways and times of undertaking tasks, protective trees outside the doorway, amulets, necklaces and many more. The Welsh people were no exception to such practices although they had developed some protective devices which were traditional only in Wales. Personalised procedural responses were rituals which offered a process

⁴⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 4/9/14.

⁴⁵ As in the case of Olly Powell in Pembrokeshire. Details of this case can be found in a letter written by John Edwards, a justice of the peace for Pembroke, to Alexander Forde in February 1693/4. (Bodl. Ashm. MS 1815, ff 1 i-v).

designed to counteract the *malefice* of the witch and included the use of witches' butter, witches' bottles, chalk flagstone ornamentation, iconographic protection of the house, the use of holy wells, rag wells, white stones, horse skulls, burning thatch or clothing under the sufferer's nose, bleeding the witch and charm papers.⁴⁶

Protective mechanisms developed over time and co-existed with the prevailing religious doctrine and, "To the majority... religion has no connection with their belief or disbelief."⁴⁷ Early modern Welsh society was reflective of the premise, "since all societies that believe in witchcraft have established methods for dealing with its onslaught, it can be argued that witch beliefs allow the sufferer to focus his or her anxiety on what they believe to be a logical cause for their misfortune and to take remedial action."⁴⁸ Remedial action was immediate and accessible to every individual, whatever their financial situation: it was not expensive, required little effort and the remedies were easy to implement. Through remedial action, threatened individuals were provided with a tool which sufficiently empowered them to contain the evil forces that both the individual and the community felt were at large.

Witch's butter *orymenyn y witsis* (*ffwng ar goed marw*) was a uniquely Welsh phenomenon which provided an immediate solution to any person who thought *malefice* had been directed against them.⁴⁹ The existence of the butter on any wooden surface, in the home or barn, was a visible and certain indication that bewitchment had occurred and a set procedure, if followed, brought immediate relief to the afflicted. Witch's butter, the common name of the fungus *Exidia glandulosa*, appears on dead wood throughout the year and it belongs to the family *Tremellineae*, a characteristic of which is the spherical gelatinous fruiting body which is seen growing on dead sticks, branches, logs and tree stumps.⁵⁰ The colour of the fungus ranges from white, grey, a purplish colour and brown⁵¹ and "the jelly substance swells markedly when wet and assumes a characteristic

⁴⁶ Charm papers were used as personal protective devices but the actual papers had to be created by a conjuror and, for this reason, the discussion of charm papers and the role they played is considered in the chapter concerning communal protective mechanisms.

⁴⁷ Robyn Gwyndaf, "The Past in the Present : Folk Beliefs in Welsh Oral Tradition." *Fabula*, 1994, p. 236.

⁴⁸ Jon Oplinger, *The Politics of Demonology The European Witchcraze and the Mass Production of Deviance*, Susquehanna University Press, Selinsgrove, 1990, p. 49.

⁴⁹ No evidence for the use of witch's butter as a counter-magical agent has been found for any other witchcraft case study for the early modern world. The use of witch's butter was referred to initially by , Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, Heath Granton, London, 1933, citing NLW, Great Sessions 4/719/2/48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55. Great Sessions for Carmarthen (1656). Gwenllian David or Lys Hier of Llangadock and Margaret David or Maggie Hier of Llangadock. 16th day of June, 1656 , (particularly 52).

⁵⁰ A.H. Reginald Buller, *Researches on Fungi*, Volume II., Hafner Publishing Co., New York, 1958, p.156-163.

⁵¹ Constantine John Alexopoulos, *Introductory Mycology*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., New York, Second edition, 1962, p. 446-449.

appearance and color (sic), but when dry, the mass collapses and nearly disappears."⁵²

Overcoming or circumventing the *malefice* was easily achieved by following a set procedure: if a heated pin, poker or knife was forced through the butter, the witch would be made to undo her work and the bewitchment lifted, thus avoiding a personal confrontation with the witch. If there were no obvious signs of witch's butter in the immediate home environment, some could be collected from the woodlands or even left on the wood in the woodlands and the same procedure followed to achieve cessation of any *malefice*. All a threatened individual needed to do to obtain relief from any inflicted bewitchment was to locate some witch's butter and follow the procedure.



*Witch's butter found in Penglais Wood, Aberystwyth, September 1994.
Photo: Andy Rastall*

⁵² Ernst Albert Gaumann, *The Fungi A Description of their Morphological Features and Evolutionary Development*, Hafner Publishing Co., New York, 1952, p. 318-319.

Precise details of popular beliefs surrounding witch's butter and how people used the fungus to counteract bewitchment occur in the testimony of Margaret Rogers, a witness in a Carmarthenshire witchcraft as *malefice* case. The case concerned Gwenllian David/Lys Hier of Llangadock/Llangadog. Gwenllian David was an old woman when depositions were lodged against her for witchcraft practices in 1656. Thirteen statements from witnesses provided evidence of the types of *malefice* in which Gwenllian was thought to have indulged as she was accused of bewitching both livestock and people. Witch's butter on the doorpost was mentioned by several witnesses and Margaret Rogers gave a very detailed account of the appearance of witch's butter.⁵³ Margaret stated

*"that there was a kind of butter or Sybstance pitched upon the door post of the house of Thomas John her husband, at which time there was a poor woman begging at the door that first viewed it and told the Examinante that it was witches butter whereupon the Examinante went to her neighbours and acquainted them with it and asked their advice for it, so that David John Rhudderch being one of the neighbourhood took a knife and laid it on the fire till it was near (or red) hott, and stuck it through the said substance into the door post and left it there for a fortnights time and in the interim that the knife remained in the door post Gwenllian David alias Lys Hier lay sick and cried to take the knife out of her back and the Deponent thought of the knife that was thrust into the door post, and took it out, but it was no sooner taken out but immediately the said Gwenllian began to recover."*⁵⁴

Thomas John supported the testimony of Margaret Roger, saying that

*"he was in place when the aforesaid David John Rhudderch stuck the knife through the Substance into the door post and that he thrust it in further, and within a few days after the Deponent went to thresh into one end of the house where the said Gwenllian David lay sick and heard her groaning and crying for to take the knife from her back and the Deponent wished his wife to take out the knife from the door post which she did and immediately thereupon the said Gwenllian began to recover."*⁵⁵

Witnesses corroborated the testimony about the witch's butter and added more details of the effect that the knife through the butter had on the suspected witch. Margaret stated that, as a consequence of such action, Gwenllian had been confined to bed with severe back pains, pains which Gwenllian herself described as resembling a knife in her back. Other witnesses further corroborated the testimony, one even stating that Gwenllian's

⁵³ NLW, Great Sessions 4/719/2/48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55. Great Sessions for Carmarthen (1656). Gwenllian David or Lys Hier of Llangadock and Margaret David or Maggie Hier of Llangadock. 16th day of June, 1656 , (particularly 52). I would like to thank Associate Professor David Kent, University of New England , for his assistance in transcribing this case in 1994/5.

⁵⁴ NLW, Great Sessions 4/719/2/53. Great Sessions for Carmarthen (1656).

⁵⁵ NLW, Great Sessions 4/719/2/53. Great Sessions for Carmarthen (1656).

condition was so poor that the knife had been removed from the witch's butter because of the participants' guilt over the consequences of their actions on such an old woman.⁵⁶

Supportive details of the methods people undertook when using witch's butter in an effort to counteract witching activities were also recorded by Elias Owen.⁵⁷ Owen's late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century sources testified to the continuation of this customary practice.⁵⁸ Records from Glamorgan revealed few witchcraft cases of any type but the popular beliefs of the people were recorded by Morgan Rhys who published a work on the traditions of Glamorgan in 1855 which provided details of the well-known witches of Cwm Afon.⁵⁹ The witches were called Nell, Bess and Catti of Cwm Rheibio⁶⁰ and it was believed that these women could inflict injury on anyone or any living thing. Rhys interviewed the older members of the Pont Rhydyfen community who gave details of the women's activities, with especial reference to Nell.

*"Nell was very troublesome to her timid neighbours : she paid them a visit once a week, with her pail to get milk ; but this powerful being was not satisfied with milk alone ; it was necessary, slyly, at her departure , to deposit in her apron a good slice of bread and cheese : for, if she was not fully satisfied, she would put pieces of witch's butter about the house, in the dairy, and even on the tables."*⁶¹

This oral history information from the first half of the nineteenth century, when the informants were living in the same community as Nell, provides evidence for a different use of witch's butter. Nell seemed to be so sure of the fear which people had of her malefice abilities that she used the butter as an intimidatory tool when she felt her blackmailing tactics for food and drink were yielding insufficient payoffs. Whatever Nell's reasons, she ensured her sustenance by eliciting extra "protection payments", her displeasure underlined through her use of the butter.

The use of witch's butter as a protective mechanism and the beliefs surrounding the substance had a long tradition and both court records and oral histories indicated that the

56 NLW, Great Sessions 4/719/2/52. Great Sessions for Carmarthen (1656).

24 Elias Owen, *Welsh Folk-Lore : A Collection of the Folk-Tales and Legends of North Wales*, Woodhall, Minshall and Co. Oswestry, 1887, p. 249.

58 I would like to thank Robin Gwyndaf of the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, Cardiff, for a copy of Eirlys Gruffydd's article entitled "Witches' Butter in Wales." *Bulletin of the British Mycological Society*, Vol. 19, i, April, 1985, p. 63-65 and for Eirlys' correspondence on this and other matters.

59 Morgan Rhys, "Legendary Lore. Unpublished Traditions of Glamorgan" *Cambrian Journal*, 1855, p.117-119. The exact same text, word for word but without acknowledgement, is used by Martin Phillips in *The Folklore of The Afan and Margam District*, The Guardian Press Ltd, Neath, 1933, p.14. The original version of Rhys' is the actual statement of several elderly women who knew the witches but in Phillips version, the whole has been reduced to a folk tale and presented as such.

60 *Rheibio* - Welsh word meaning "to bewitch."

61 Morgan Rhys, op. cit., p.117.

substance was used, where found, all over Wales. The simplicity of the practice was important: it was free and readily available and people believed it worked, a positive empowerment tool for any who felt that they had been threatened by a witch. According to the written records, the use of traditional protective mechanisms in the instance of witch's butter, continued for well over two centuries. "It must be remembered that such details, recorded by eighteenth - and nineteenth-century antiquarians, were those that survived despite the watchful and vengeful attention of the Church, ever ready to stamp out pagan practices wherever they might be found. The sheer tenacity of these pagan survivals indicates their significance." ⁶²

Witch bottles were another form of personal protective device used throughout Wales. but were not unique to Wales as they occurred in various forms in all parts of the British Isles, but had a variety of uses. The magical significance of the bottle, based on the contents, which, traditionally, included items of human origin such as hair, nail clippings and urine, all items considered necessary for the effective working of the bottle's protective role. In some areas of Britain such as Sussex, Bristol,⁶³ Kent⁶⁴ and Essex,⁶⁵ the bottle was filled with nails, glass, pins and then urine and heated over an open fire or buried under doorways to protect the occupants from witchcraft. The bottles also appear to have been used as part of a magical process which did not bode well for the victim. In England, the person who was to be bewitched had the items stolen from them and these were then placed in the bottle which was then buried or placed in a safe place until the bewitchment had been successful.

The purpose of witch bottles in England was examined by Purkiss who also referred to the bottle as a bellarmine, but the usage she explores does not appear to have any supportive testimony from early modern Wales. According to Purkiss, the bottle was directed specifically against the witch: "Another typical remedy was the magical bottle or bellarmine, which closed off the witch's own waters when it was sealed. In the bottle were placed the witch's hair or a piece of her clothing, and ideally her urine. The bottle was then sealed. The bellarmine was supposed to seal the witch's body, making her unable to urinate. Symbolically, however, its significance lies in its constriction of the witch's body. Unable to expand or pollute, she is rendered harmless."⁶⁶ An alternative use of the bottle is given by Thomas, who refers to bellarmine flasks "containing the hair, nail-parings, etc., of the victim for whom relief was being sought. Chemical tests confirm that the bottles once contained urine.", a form of sympathetic magic. This usage seems

⁶² Anne Ross, and Don Robins, *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989, p. 37.

⁶³ Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999, p. 19.

⁶⁴ ibid., p. 201.

⁶⁵ ibid., p. 218.

⁶⁶ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History Early Modern and Twentieth - Century Representations*, Routledge, London, 1996, p.124 -125, at 125.

⁶⁷ Keith Thomas, op. cit., p. 648-649, quote from p. 649.

to tally more closely with Welsh practice, though is not identical to it.⁶⁷

Welsh people also used bottles as counter-magical tools, but not generally as part of a *malefice* or bewitchment process. The bottles were used to hold items which protected the owner of the bottle, whether the bottle was filled with iron filings, sealed in lead or held a charm paper. Witch's bottles in Wales were used, in the main, to protect from and counteract bewitchment rather than to engage in *malefice*, and the importance of the bottle was based on its use as a container in which the charm paper and other protective items could be safely carried. The "y dyn hysbys (lit. "the knowing man")⁶⁸ would write a charm on a piece of paper and this charm would be "placed inside a small bottle known as *potel y dyn hysbys*," which the purchaser, usually a farmer, then had to place in a safe place "in a building where the animals were kept, and the cork was on no account to be removed."⁶⁹ How much significance can be attached to the actual bottle as part of the charm in Wales remains uncertain but, as such bottles were expensive items, the faith the owners had in the protective capacity of the witch bottle was probably very considerable. Many of these witch bottles were passed from generation to generation and the charm papers within them were so worded that generational protection of the family and the land on which they lived was unlimited. In 1987, a charm, written on a piece of paper, was found enclosed in a nineteenth-century glass bottle deposited inside the wall of a building which was then being demolished on the outskirts of Welshpool.⁷⁰

Witch's bottles from Merioneth and Glamorgan, on display at the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagans' in Cardiff, are of significance, particularly for Merioneth, as both the Quarter Sessions and Great Sessions records have been lost. The witch bottle from Glamorgan, pictured below, clearly shows a nail and some other indistinguishable items, as the contents, over time, have been reduced. The nail, probably made of iron, indicated that this bottle was used as part of a defensive process as iron was regarded as very powerful when it came to protection from the supernatural.⁷¹ In this case, the bottle may have had another role and been used as a means of counteracting *malefice*, its importance lying in its use as a container for iron filings and other metals such as lead which were known to counteract witchcraft.

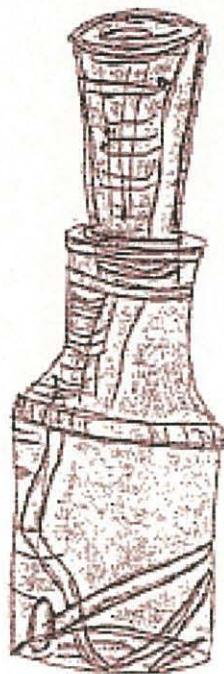
⁶⁷ Keith Thomas, op. cit., p. 648-649, quote from p. 649.

⁶⁸ This phrase has been quoted directly from Elias Owen, "Folk-Lore, Superstitions, or What-Not, In Montgomeryshire and Elsewhere." *Montgomeryshire Collections*, Vol.XVI, 1883, p.153.

⁶⁹ Robin Gwyndaf, "The Past in the Present: Folk Beliefs in Welsh Oral Tradition.", *Fabula* , 1994, p. 253

⁷⁰ Communication from the Curator of the Powysland Museum at Welshpool to the Museum of Welsh Life at Cardiff on 6th August, 1987, enclosing a copy of the charm paper and asking for a transcription. Located in the archives of the Museum of Welsh Life, 1998.

⁷¹ W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 1990 edition published by Citadel Press, New York, see p. 276-277 for a discussion of taboos associated with iron and pp. 34,87-8, 95, 135, 138, 144, 147 for oral history and the counter-magical actions of iron.



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The witch bottle from Merioneth, illustrated below, was used as a container for a charm, the paper and bottle being necessary for the safety and protection of the item rather than as a significant aspect of the charm or spell.⁷³ This witch's bottle shows the charm paper still within the bottle, for the "conjuror will then write on paper This he will put in a bottle which, as a rule, he seals with lead."⁷⁴ The requestor of the charm or spell was then instructed to place the bottle in the appropriate place, such as the house, the barn, cow house, stable or elsewhere, to ensure protection of the people or beasts within.⁷⁵ Bottles were also used for the purpose of containing spirits: "I have also been shown a gatepost in the parish of Manafon, under which it was currently reported that an Yspryd (Imp) had been deposited, which Gwallter Mechain had laid and put into a small

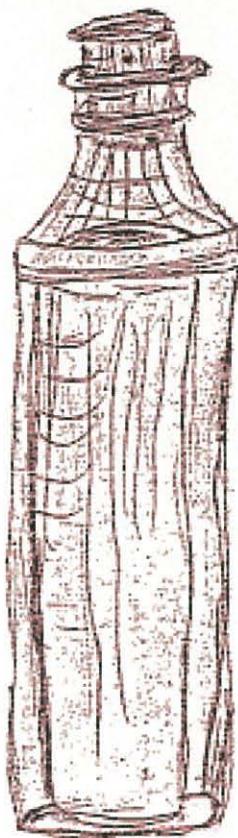
72 Line-drawing by Elisabeth Parkin, 1998 from the original from Glamorgan at the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, Cardiff.

73 W. Ll. Davies, "The Conjuror in Montgomeryshire." *Collections Historical and Archeological Relating to Montgomeryshire*, Vol. 45, 1937-38, p.159. and D.R.T. "Demonology and Witchcraft." *Montgomeryshire Collections*, XXXVII, c. 1910-1926, p.146.

74 W. Ll. Davies, "The Conjuror in Montgomeryshire." ... *ibid.*, p. 159.

75 *ibid.*, p.159.

bottle."⁷⁶ Other types of bottles containing charms written on parchment have been found and these were used to protect cattle from both disease and witchcraft.⁷⁷



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Further insight into the actual role of the witch's bottles may be derived from the later use of other bottles, pots and containers from Wales, most of which can be distinguished from the type of witch bottles pictured for Glamorgan and Merioneth. These other types of bottles were called bellarmine jugs/bottles. In Wales, therefore, there appears to have been two types of magical bottle in use, the witch bottle, made of glass, and the bellarmine jug, which was not made of glass. The role of the bellarmine bottle may

⁷⁶ D.R.T. "Demonology and Witchcraft." *Montgomeryshire Collections*, XXXVII, c.1910 -1926, p.146.

⁷⁷ Thomas Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folk-Lore and Folk-Custom*, Methuen and Co. Ltd. , London, 1930, p. 141.

⁷⁸ Line-drawing by Elisabeth Parkin, 1998 from the original from Merioneth at the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, Cardiff.

have had some connection with a cursing ritual because its contents typically were different from that of the glass witch bottles, according to evidence which exists in the case of the Buckley pot and other bellarmine jars. An article in the *Gower* magazine described one of these witch bottles as a Bellarmine jug made of stoneware and originally manufactured in Germany. The jug contains "twists of human hair, calcined wire and finger-nail cuttings, iron nails and fragments of cloth."⁷⁹ The bottles were used specifically as charms against witches or as curses against the owner of the enclosed material and often had an anthropomorphic bearded face on the bottle.⁸⁰

Buckley pots were yet another type of witch bottle and one particular pot found in 1983 has been the subject of considerable research by members of the Museum of Welsh Life. The pot has been called a "Buckley pot" as it was made of Buckley clay and bottles fitting the description, a bulbous jug shape, were made in Buckley, near the border of Flintshire and Cheshire, and transported to London from the eighteenth century onwards.⁸¹ The pot was found buried under a yew tree at Allt y Rhiw, Wern Ddu, near Oswestry but it does not contain the usual items associated with bottles used for cursing. Instead, it contains lead which was poured in after the pot had been made. The use of lead was significant because both lead and iron were considered to have properties which had the ability to ward off evil spirits.⁸² The burial of the pot containing lead under the yew tree would double the protection afforded the house and its occupants as yew trees were considered sacred. Pre-Christian Britons planted yew trees at places of worship as the tree was sacred to the Winter Solstice and associated with the deities of death and rebirth.⁸³ Another Buckley pot which was used in the traditional manner for cursing and which contained the usual items of human origin associated with such traditions has also been located and, according to Gruffydd,⁸⁴ the pot may have had a dual role as the contents indicated that it was probably used for both cursing and warding off evil.

Other surviving evidence from the modern period gives a glimpse of earlier practices. Protective ornamentation was a common feature of Welsh personal protective devices.

⁷⁹ D. le Cronier Chapman, "Witch Bottles in Gower.", *Gower*, Vol. VIII, 1948-62, p. 27.

⁸⁰ Chapman is quoting an article in *The Times*, March, 1954 concerning the finding of a Bellarmine jug in Stepney, London and is requesting information on a similar jug in his possession. The jug was given to him, complete with contents, by a longshoresman and crabber, Charlie Phillips of Horton. Chapman wished to know how the bottle had come to Gower.

⁸¹ J. Bentley, "The significance of Buckley Clay Products in the chemical advances of the Eighteenth Century." *The Magazine of the Buckley Society*, No. 10, April, 1985.

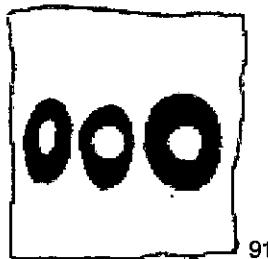
⁸² Robin Gwyndaf and Eirlys Gruffydd, "A Buckley Pot Used as a Charm." *The Magazine of the Buckley Society*, No. 10, 1985, p.15.

⁸³ M. Grieve, *A Modern Herbal*, Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 866 and D. J. Conway, *By Oak, Ash and Thorn Modern Celtic Shamanism*, Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1995, p. 288.

⁸⁴ Eirlys Gruffydd, "A Buckley Pot used in Witchcraft." *Buckley*, No. 6, 1981, p.42.

Pentacles⁸⁵ were often carved into living trees and on doors as a protection against evil as well as other types of misfortune.⁸⁶ According to a letter of 1804, "The belief in witchcraft is still strong.... At every house you will perceive a horseshoe, cross, or some charm of defence against these venomous spirits."⁸⁷ Other nineteenth-century authors have detailed the methods of keeping the witch at bay and of protecting the individual from harm.⁸⁸

A particular type of protective ornamentation found in almost all the counties of Wales was that of flagstone ornamentation, usually done in chalk. The practice was not unique to Wales as it was also found in Westmoreland, now Cumbria, in the 1920s,⁸⁹ and in the Cotswolds as late as 1973.⁹⁰ The Cotswolds chalk ornamentation was found on the hearth of a building and was to ensure that witches could not come down the chimney or up through any cracks in the floor.



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Chalk ornamentation in Wales was used specifically to keep evil spirits from entering the house and, in order to achieve this, front entrance doorsteps and flagstones were washed and then ornamented using white chalk. There was no set pattern to the design although it usually followed a common theme: a straight line was drawn around the four sides on the surface of the flag and a series of loops were made on the inner sides of these lines. This formed a rectangular ornamental border around the flag and the rest of the inner space was customarily filled with chalk dots although other decorations were sometimes drawn inside the flag.⁹²

⁸⁵ Jonathon Ceredig Davies, *Folk-lore of West and Mid-Wales* "Welsh Gazette" Offices, Aberystwyth, 1911. See p. 284 for more information about pentacles.

⁸⁶ Thomas Gwynn Jones, *Welsh FolkLore and Folk-Custom*, Methuen and Co.Ltd., London, 1930, p. 141.

⁸⁷ Reverend J. Evans, *Letters written during a Tour through South Wales in 1803*, Printed for C. and R. Baldwin, 1804, p. 398. Footnote for quote.

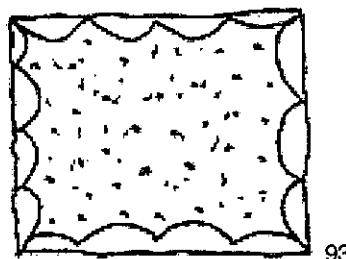
⁸⁸ Marie Trevelyan, *Glimpses of Welsh Life and Character*, John Hogg, London, 1893, p. 286-289.

⁸⁹ "White Chalk Ornamentation on the Flags Before Doorways." Addenda B, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol. LXXX, Seventh Series, Vol. V, 1925, p.120. (Signed "Anon.")

⁹⁰ Letter in *Country Life*, 1973, from Mrs. E. Preston of Worcestershire with a photograph of the chalk ornamentation on the hearth at the Fleece Inn at Bretforton in the Cotswolds.

⁹¹ Line-drawing by Sally Parkin from the photograph accompanying Mrs. E. Preston's Letter in *Country Life*, ibid.

⁹² "White Chalk Ornamentation ..." op. cit., p.120.



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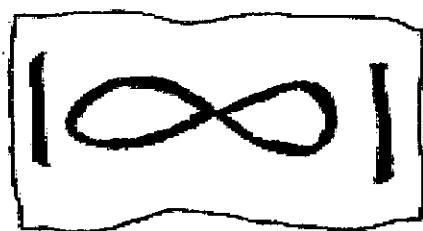
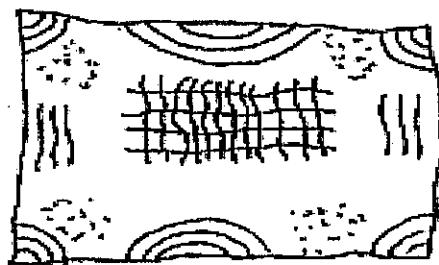
Merioneth, in particular, was noted for the use of chalk flagstone ornamentation.. According to Hewett, "In olden days various patterns were chalked upon freshly washed doorsteps to prevent bad luck entering the dwelling..."⁹⁴ The actual extent of chalk flagstone ornamentation used as a personal protection against witchcraft in Wales was indicated in a survey undertaken by staff of the Museum of Welsh Life in 1974-5.⁹⁵ In response to a request for information, replies indicated that this custom, sometimes referred to as *stono* and *fflowro* had been very common throughout Wales although the designs were not always done in chalk. Information from Montgomeryshire stated that elder leaves were used to mark the patterns, while in Anglesey, the woman of the house mixed a white powder with water to make the mixture for the design, and patterns were also made using dock and coal tar. Another Anglesey custom was to use a ball of chalk, called a *peicla*, *picla* or *pincla*, to mark the floor underneath the furniture and around the hearth. In the industrial valleys of South Wales, the chalk ball process was also used but was called *stono* or *stonio*.⁹⁶

⁹³ Line-drawing by Elisabeth Parkin from the description in the text of Eurwyn Wiliam, "The Protection of the House: Some Iconographic Evidence from Wales." *Folklore*, Vol. 89, II, 1978, p.132.

⁹⁴ Hope Hewett, *Walking Through Merioneth*, The Welsh Outlook Press, Newtown, Montgomeryshire, n.d., p. 62.

⁹⁵ Eurwyn Wiliam, "To keep the devil at Bay." *Country Quest*, May 1975, Vol. 15, No. 12, p. 34-36.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 34.



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"Making flowers" described the ornamentation procedure in the Rhondda, a practice which was still traditional up until the end of World War II. In this region, the hearth and the floor were decorated : after the fender was removed, the hearth was washed then sprinkled with scouring sand and, using a piece of bluestone or *carreg sgwrio*, the woman of the house pressed down on the stone, rotated it and made a pattern of her own choosing. There were three types of designs, an overall rubbing, circles which touched one another and circles which overlapped and ran one into the other. The hearth was then left to dry and the sand brushed off when it was dry or wiped clean of the sand immediately, leaving the patterns scoured white into the hearth. The woman would then begin on the flagstone floor but different patterns were used on the floor where an overall chequerboard effect was the end result as one flag was marked with circles and the next with lines. Sand was then sprinkled over the whole area and, some women went so far as to mark the flags in the yard as well.⁹⁸

97 Line-drawings by Sally Parkin from the pictures in the text of Eurwyn Wiliam, "To keep the devil at Bay." *Country Quest*, May 1975, Vol. 15, No. 12, p. 35.

98 ibid., p. 34-35.



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Communities in West Wales were noted for the use of chalk flagstone ornamentation and antiquarian evidence indicates that the tradition was still commonplace in the 1880s. The chalk used in West Wales was brought in especially from St. Davids by the local shopkeepers as there was no natural local supply of white chalk around Porth Mawr. Demand was so strong for this chalk that the shopkeepers were obliged to carry it as white chalk was considered more efficacious than any other chalk, probably because white was associated with purity. If white chalk was not available, people substituted a yellowish soft stone collected near Rhosneigr or, failing that, used green designs using leaves. The entire process was undertaken on Saturday when the area to be marked was washed and the design made so that both the design and the occupants of the house were ready for the holy day of Sunday. This practice was repeated anew every Saturday although some people undertook the procedure every few days.¹⁰⁰

Some women in Caernarvonshire used paraffin or sweet oil to make patterns on the flags, a cross on every tile of the kitchen floor.¹⁰¹ Caernarvonshire households also used chalk markings to protect themselves, the doorstep being washed each morning and marked whilst still wet. The patterns varied: "a chain-like pattern along the edge of the stone, the circles or links being fairly large, with another chain traced over it, the circles in this case passing through the middle of the others..... a pattern of smaller and more carefully rounded circles, in three rows, and occasionally simply a band along the edge of the stone enclosing another band."¹⁰² Gwynn Jones states that the pattern and variations were also marked on the floors inside the house, on the floors and along the walls, even under the furniture. Alternatively, patterns were not marked but a black-leaded band of six to eight inches in width with white pebbles placed on it at intervals, was marked close to the wall or under the furniture.¹⁰³ The theme sometimes progressed outside, with black stones placed on either side of the doorstep. Window sills as well as panels located under windows and above doors were also decorated with pebbles, broken glass, beach shells, shaped stones and broken pottery in homes

⁹⁹ Line-drawing by Sally Parkin from the pictures in the text of Eurwyn Wiliam, "To keep the devil at Bay," *Country Quest*, May 1975, Vol. 15, No. 12, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ "White Chalk Ornamentation on the Flags Before Doorways." Addenda B *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol. LXXX, Seventh Series, Vol. V, 1925, p.119-120. Letters from Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Pheobe Llewelin to the editor.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.34

¹⁰² Thomas Gwynn Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.176.

which were otherwise without any other type of decoration.¹⁰⁴

Carmarthenshire people went to considerable effort using local limestone. Each family had a pattern which was used inside the house in a practice which had become an art form. The patterns were never used by other families and were passed down from mother to daughter.¹⁰⁵ Others in Carmarthenshire used *pele* which were lumps of combined coal dust, and clay, called *culm*. The *culm* was formed into letters or designs, allowed to dry, and then whitewashed. The practice was also used on the fireplace itself, the *culm* painted on and whitewashed when dry. Special patterns were used in Carmarthenshire for special events and washed off when that event had passed. Doorsteps and window sills would be whitewashed for visitors, funerals necessitated the whitewashing of the walls of the yard around the house and the birth of a child was celebrated with papered walls and foxglove flowers which were incorporated into the lime-mortared floors, while the chimney and fireplaces were white-washed.¹⁰⁶

The colour white was very important. White stones were particularly significant when it came to protecting members of the community from the supernatural, witches and potential hauntings. The grave of a witch from Merioneth named Dorti¹⁰⁷ was marked with white stones by the parishioners in order to prevent Dorti from returning to haunt the locality. Rhymes still exist which people were to recite when placing the white stone on Dorti's grave, a tradition which was still being practised in 1944.¹⁰⁸ Other counties also provided examples of the importance of white stones in association with graves, particularly in the counties of Radnor and Glamorgan. In Radnor, the Reverend Jonathan Williams recorded a very old custom which used to be observed at funerals in Rhayader: "On that occasion every attendant carried in his hand a small pebble stone, which on the arrival of the procession to a certain spot, he threw to a large heap of the same materials..."¹⁰⁹ In Glamorgan, the head and foot stones of graves were painted white: "This custom has been handed down from generation to generation, and even to the present day, in Wales, the gravestones of the poor are whitened..." in order to keep witches from snatching bodies when the corpse of a murderer was unavailable for

¹⁰⁴ ibid., p.176.

¹⁰⁵ ibid., p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ ibid., p.36 citing D.E. Jones "Hanes Plwyfi Llangueler a Phenboyr.", 1899.

¹⁰⁷ Dafydd G. Ifan, "Witches grave on the banks of a Welsh Lake." *Country Quest*, May, 1987, p.9. I am grateful to J.M. Griffiths, County Librarian, County Offices, Caernarvon, Gwynedd (in 1988) for drawing this article, and supplying it, to my attention.

¹⁰⁸ ibid., p. 9 and W.J. Hemp, "Two Cairns." *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, 1944, No. 5 , p.101-102; O.M. Edwards, *Yr Hwiangerdii*, 1911, p. 72. and Frank Ward *Lakes of Wales*, 1931.

¹⁰⁹ Reverend Jonathan Williams, *The History of Radnorshire*, R. Mason , Tenby, 1859 or Edwin Davies, editor and compiler from the manuscript of the late Reverend Jonathan Williams *A General History of the County of Radnor*, Davies and Co., Brecknock, 1905, p.168.

making Dead Man's fingers.¹¹⁰ The white-washing of houses as a protection against witchcraft was also common in Taibach and the surrounding district in Glamorgan.¹¹¹

Anthropomorphic devices were another important protective device as a form of ornamentation of the house and buildings. These appeared on some witch bottles or pots as well as on or near door posts. The figures were recognisably human but tended to concentrate on the male rather than the female form, their significance as a means of protection reiterated through the practice of placing such figures at house entrance ways or just inside the house. According to Wiliam, "Human or sub-human figures..... whether found beside doorways or beside fire places, represent one manifestation of the wide range of protective devices used to keep the house and home safe from evil."¹¹² Many of these figures, usually in pairs and of a phallic or hermaphroditic nature, have been found throughout Wales.

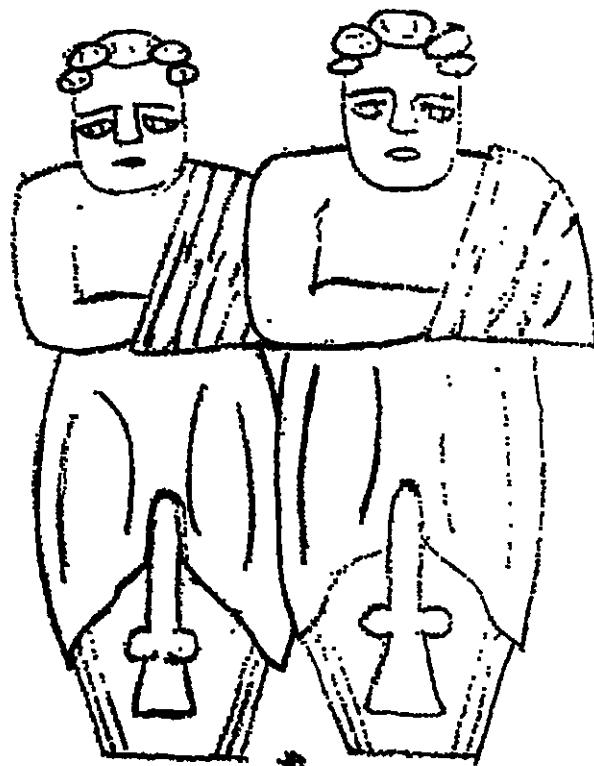
The most widely known figures are those found in a farmhouse in Llangennnydd on the Gower peninsula of Glamorgan, in a house which was re-located to the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagans in 1951. The figures were found in the seventeenth-century section of the house, side by side on the door frame at the entrance. The two figures are almost identical and both have emphasised large erect phalluses, testicles and separate scrotal sacs.¹¹³ The carved figures were usually placed on either side of the door and their appearance was always of an overtly sexual nature as this was considered to be a powerful protective device.

¹¹⁰ Marie Trevelyan, *Glimpses of Welsh Life.....*, op. cit., p. 289.

¹¹¹ A. Leslie Evans, *The Story of Taibach and District*, Talbot Printing Company Ltd., Port Talbot, 1963, p.174.

¹¹² Eurwyn Wiliam, "The Protection of the House..." op. cit., p.132.

¹¹³ ibid., p.128.



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Gwynn Jones mentions a house located in north-west Denbighshire which contained "two wooden figures, of a somewhat inelegant appearance, one on each side of the door."¹¹⁵ Another pair of figures can be found at Ynysymaengwyn, Tywyn in Merioneth,¹¹⁶ and others at the sixteenth-century "Feathers Inn" in Ludlow, while hermaphroditic figures have been found at Glascoed, Llanddeiniolen in Caernarvonshire in a circa sixteenth century house and at Plas Newydd, Llandwrog in Caernarvonshire which was built in 1632.¹¹⁷

Sometimes the houses which had such devices incorporated into the building were also painted red as this was thought to add more protection for the household against witches

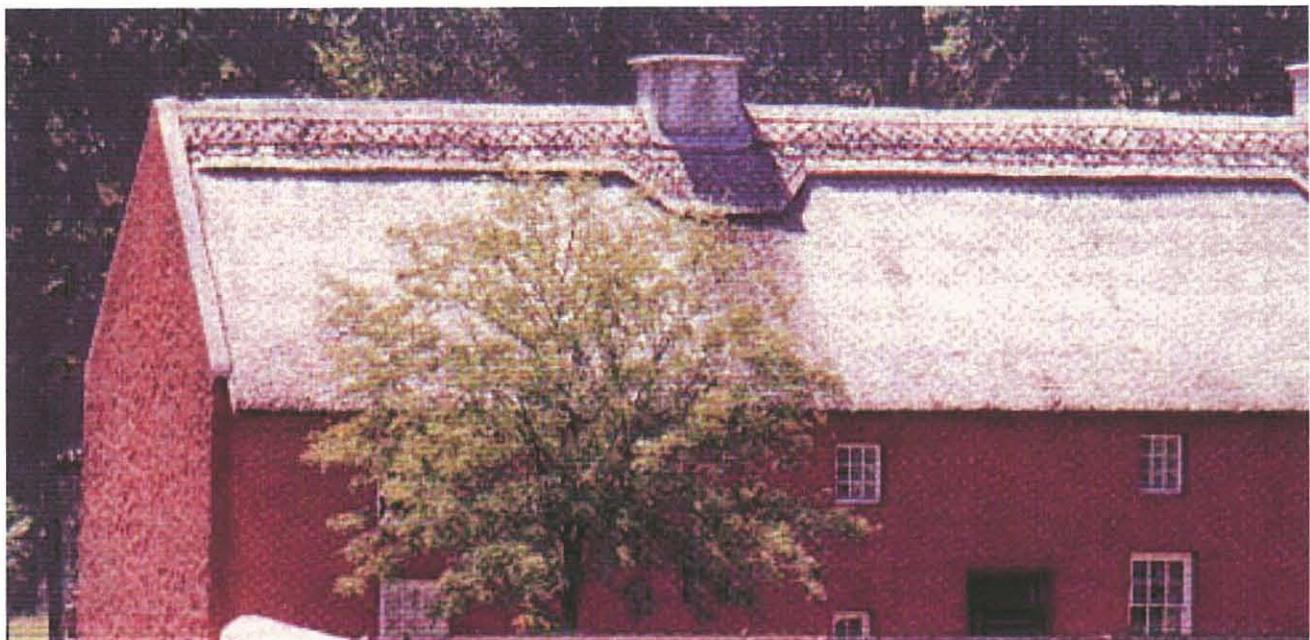
¹¹⁴ Line-drawing by Jesse Parkin done in 1998 at the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagan's, Cardiff from the original doorframe on the house from Glamorgan.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Gwynn Jones, op. cit., p.177.

¹¹⁶ Eurwyn Wiliam, op. cit. , p.130.

¹¹⁷ ibid., p.131.

and evil influences.¹¹⁸ The picture below is the house from Glamorgan, from which the line-drawings of the anthropomorphic figures was taken, now located at the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, Cardiff.¹¹⁹



One of the most significant, easily accessible and common personal protective devices available to the victims of *malefice* were the holy wells, the use of which was a deeply ingrained aspect of Welsh religious life. Water-veneration was common amongst ancient pagans who worshipped wells, springs, lakes and rivers as gods and associated all of these with ceremonies of purification, divination, fertility, sacrifice, healing and weather charms.¹²⁰ Water is one of the four essential elements for life (the others are fire, earth and air) and, as such, oblations were offered to the goddess whom it was believed provided the life-giving water. The Celtic people's great veneration for sacred wells and water was harnessed by the Christian missionaries who selected and then consecrated

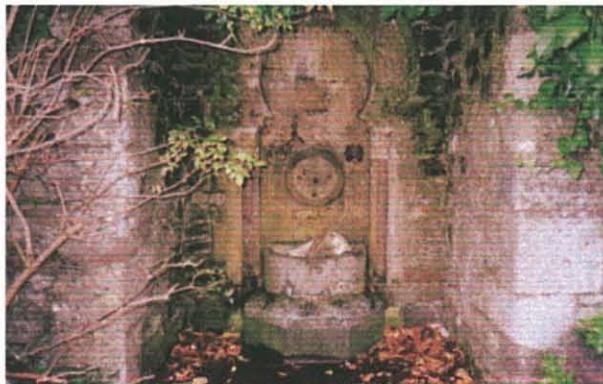
¹¹⁸ The house exterior from which the anthropomorphic line drawing was made at St. Fagan's is painted entirely in red as an additional protection against evil.

¹¹⁹ The photograph was taken by Jesse Parkin in August, 1998.

¹²⁰ Francis Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1992, (reprint of the 1954 edition), p.12.

certain wells for baptism, unifying the people of a district through the patronage of the well, now designated to a particular saint.¹²¹ Such a policy ensured the continued use of the site, only the nature of the entity being worshipped having changed.¹²² The water remained sacred and it is this sacredness which made the wells useful for protection against bewitchment and the activities of witches since substitution was accompanied by the survival of the rites and customs which had been associated with paganism and water. All that changed was the association of the well with Christianity, not the methods used to obtain the healing or protection. For centuries these wells were "the doctors of the peasantry".¹²³

After the Reformation the use of wells was claimed as superstitious but even though all the statues, hoods and screens which had been built over many wells were removed, the wells themselves, because they were naturally occurring springs and often the source of streams, rivers and village water supplies, remained.¹²⁴ Three people from the county of Montgomery were brought before the Star Chamber accused of being "common offerers unto wells" in 1594 during the reign of Elizabeth I.¹²⁵



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In using the protective mechanism of a holy well, the *malefice* sufferer was still exercising

¹²³ Francis Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1992, (reprint of the 1954 edition), p. 12.

¹²¹ Elias Owen, "Holy Wells, or Water-Veneration." *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol VIII, Fifth Series, 1891, p.8-9 and Francis Jones, op. cit., p. vii.

¹²² Francis Jones, op. cit. , p. 22.

¹²³ ibid., p. 29.

¹²⁴ ibid., p. 58-59.

¹²⁵ Ifan ab Owen Edwards *A Catalogue of Star Chamber Proceedings Relating to Wales*, Board of Celtic Studies, University of Wales, Cardiff, No. I, 1929 , p. 125.

¹²⁶ Photograph of the well at St. Fagans, Cardiff, taken by Sally Parkin in August, 1998.

his or her personal choice although who was the victim and who was the agent of harm becomes a little clouded when the use of some of the holy wells is examined. Wells were not used only for personal blessings and curing; some wells had a darker purpose and were specifically used for cursing. Cursing wells existed throughout Wales and it has generally been assumed that the wells became cursing wells because the saint to whom they were dedicated initially stated that the wells would grant any wish desired and refrained from decreeing that the wells should only be used for good purposes.

Among Welsh people, however, cursing at holy wells and verbal cursing was distinct from the *malefice* of the witch: verbal cursing was ill-wishing another by calling on God in a ritualised procedure to exact retribution on the person who had wronged the curser. The *malefice* of the witch, however, was always premeditated, an intentional and specific harming. In other words, cursing was not regarded as being in the same category as that of the *malefice* with which the witch was associated.¹²⁷ Any person could undertake cursing but only the witch was capable of *malefice*.

Suggett's view differs from this assumption however, suggesting that blessing and cursing as speech acts became related to witchcraft and eventually resulted in formal cursing being redefined as witchcraft in Wales.¹²⁸ The premise is difficult to justify because, as evidence shows, neither the witch or the victim regarded "the witch's malediction (w)as an unjustified response to a relatively innocuous offence."¹²⁹ There is, perhaps, a need to recognise that "performative utterance," as Larner refers to the spoken word, whether as a curse, charm or blessing, has a long history in pre-literate societies, where the degrees of meaning within the spoken word were particularly important.¹³⁰ Performative utterances in seventeenth-century Scotland were a form of social control but there had to be a social agreement that the words constituted an action.¹³¹ In Scotland, just as in Wales, "a person who was formally cursed was deemed socially to be a cursed person."¹³² Goodare sees the use of curses by women in Scotland as their response to their need "to gain and hold the respect of neighbours"¹³³ whereas men resorted to physical violence to achieve the same end. Cursing made such women vulnerable to an accusation of witchcraft if the object of the curse then

¹²⁷ This theme was explored in Sally Parkin, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Wales: The Counties of Merioneth, Radnor, Brecon and Glamorgan*, Gwyn Alf Williams Memorial Award for 1998, Submitted to The Welsh Academy, Cardiff, June, 1998, p. 18- 20.

¹²⁸ Richard Suggett, "Witchcraft Dynamics in Early Modern Wales", in Michael Roberts and Simone Clark (eds) *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000, p. 75 -103., at p. 88 - 94.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 93-94.

¹³⁰ Christina Larner, *Enemies of God...*, op. cit. p. 142-143.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 143.

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 143.

¹³³ Julian Goodare, "Women and the witch-hunt in Scotland.", *Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, October, 1998, p. 288- 308, at p. 297.

experienced some misfortune.¹³⁴ Ritualised cursing in Wales, as elsewhere,¹³⁵ was structured in such a way that God's help was being requested, whereas diabolic power was typically used in *malefice* situations other than in Wales.

Cursing, however, was an element of the *malefice* process in Wales used on occasion by the accused for her own protection¹³⁶, but it is not redefined as witchcraft in popular concepts, and evidence from witchcraft as *malefice* cases supports this view. Welsh people were of the opinion that a curse, once uttered, lasted for seven years and its effect on the person it was aimed at could begin at any time. Some curses could last into the third, fourth or seventh generation. Trevelyan cites an old man in 1858 remembering the curse format, all spoken in Welsh, used in South Wales:

*" I curse thee ! I curse thee ! I curse thee standing, walking, riding, driving, running; awake, asleep; at morning, noon, and night; both eating and drinking, going out and coming in. I curse all that is made and done by thee, all that is touched by thee. May thy crops and fruit be cankered, thy flocks and herds diseased; thy daughters be ailing, and thy sons be maimed ! May thou die thrice accursed, and may thy descendants for seven generations reap the harvest of this my curse! Then shall thy house be the home of the raven and the bat, the snake and the viper ! "*¹³⁷

However, witchcraft as *malefice* cases show the different perceptions which people had about the nature of cursing as opposed to the nature of *malefice*. Katherine Lewis of Gumfreston in Pembrokeshire was brought before the courts for *malefice* witchcraft in 1607 and the testimony of witnesses alluded to both a cursing and *malefice*. Katherine was accused of having bewitched Richard Browning's pigs, ostensibly because his wife had not given her enough bread and cheese when Katherine requested these items. Soon after Katherine left, the pigs began to abort their piglets. Richard sent for Katherine to ask her to bless the pigs but she took a long time to arrive. When she did, neighbours and others testified that Katherine was very angry at being accused of harming the pigs and that "*she fell upon her knees cursing and railing and said with great oaths she had but a life to lose and if she were not a witch herself she would cause then that should do*

¹³⁴ ibid., p. 297.

¹³⁵ ibid., p. 298. Malcolm Gaskill, "Witchcraft in early modern Kent: stereotype and the background to accusations." in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts, (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe Studies in Culture and Belief*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 257-287, at p. 275

¹³⁶ Katherine Lewis used it in her own defence against Richard and Elizabeth Browning. NLW, Great Sessions 33/6/6 (1607) Great Sessions for Pembroke. The case is further detailed below.

¹³⁷ Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales*, Elliot Stock, London, 1909, p. 239, taken from the Trevelyan family collection, begun by her father, a clergyman, many years earlier than the date of Trevelyan's actual publication.

it."¹³⁸

Another case from Denbighshire also highlights the difference between what was understood to be cursing and what was meant by *malefice*. Sarah Poole lodged a petition against Elizabeth Parry who, Sarah claimed, had bewitched her child to death twelve years previously. She lodged the petition because Elizabeth had since bewitched her cow and had gone to Sarah's house "*and Scandalized me with right filthy and uncivil Language and likewise knocked me down upon both Knees and Cursed me, whereupon I fell sudonly (sic) sick and so continued Seven days.*"¹³⁹ Another example of a Welsh verbal curse was noted by a contemporary but details of the following incident were scant: on the 9th December in 1663, Philip Henry, a minister from Maelor Saesneg noted in his Diary

*"....Mary Powel thought by some to bee bewitch't, her dame (cal'd Katharin of ye Pinfold) is said to have kneel'd down and curst her; it seems shee told some storyes of her about stealing - whether true or false doth not yet appear."*¹⁴⁰

The methods of undertaking a cursing, other than verbal, were varied. St. Elian or Ffynnon Elian, known as the Cursing Well, was located in the parish of Llanelian near Colwyn Bay in Denbighshire and its reputation was widespread. People used St. Elian as a means of discovering thieves and stolen property or to curse their neighbours with sudden death or misfortune,¹⁴¹ by using a procedure described by Lewis:

"Ffynnon Eilian, which, even in the present age, is annually visited by hundreds of people, for the reprehensible purpose of invoking curses upon the heads of those who have grievously offended them. The ceremony is performed by the applicant standing upon a certain spot near the well, whilst the owner of it reads a few passages of the sacred scriptures, and then, taking a small quantity of water, gives it to the former to drink, and throws the residue over his head, which is repeated three times, the party continuing to mutter imprecations in whatever terms his

¹³⁸ NLW, Great Sessions 33/6/6 (1607) Great Sessions for Pembroke Katherine Lewis of Gumfreston, spinster, (OR Katherine Bowen, wife of Thomas Bowen, a yeoman of Tenby).

¹³⁹ NLW Chirk Castle B29a Denbighshire Quarter Sessions Files Hilary 14th January 1672/73 No. 3 Sarah Poole v. Elizabeth Parry, the Petition of Sarah Poole.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew Henry Lee (editor) *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry M.A. of Broad Oak, Flintshire A.D. 1631-1696*, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., London, 1882, p.152.

¹⁴¹ Elias Owen, op. cit. , p.11-12 citing Thomas Pennant *Tours in Wales* published in 1778 but edited by John Rhys in three volumes, printed at Caernarvonshire in 1883. Owen himself visited the well in 1888 and the cursing practice was still in vogue.

*vengeance may dictate.”*¹⁴²

The text mentions “the owner,” a reference relating to the custodian of the well who earned his or her living from donations for work done on behalf of the pilgrims and visitors at the well. The custodian should not be regarded as a practitioner of the magical arts, he or she made a living from charging people who wanted to access the well for whatever personal reason. Cursing rituals also occurred through throwing a pebble with the cursed persons’ initials on it into the well, known as “putting (name of the cursed) into the well”. The custodian would search “for the pebbles of those who had been placed therein, and take them out, and advise what should be done to counteract the curse.” and this was referred to as “taking (the name of the cursed person) out of the well.”¹⁴³ The custodian was able to earn a good living as “the trade in curses seems to have been a thriving one: its influence was powerful and widespread,”¹⁴⁴ as the custodianship of Ffynnon Elian indicated. At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the owner of this well was said to have netted nearly 300 pounds per annum both from the cursers and the cursed.

Flintshire Sessions records contain trials and punishments against owners of this well from 1816, 1820 and 1831 and cursing was still being practised at Ffynnon Elian up until the 1870s despite several attempts to stop the cursing activities.¹⁴⁵ It was only after an 1831 case that the popularity of the well declined. John Evans was the keeper of the well at this time and was brought before Judge Bolland at the Ruthin Assizes on August 3rd, 1831 by Elizabeth Davies. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment when the court heard Elizabeth’s evidence as she stated that her husband was pining away with sickness and she had walked 22 miles to have his name taken out of the well at St. Elian’s. She was charged 10 shillings, the lowest fee available, to have her husband’s name taken out of the well by John Evans and the name, as initials, was on a small square slate which John Evans lifted out of the middle of the well, along with others. Elizabeth assumed it was her husband’s because of the initials “R.D.” on the slate. She was told to take the slate home, show it to no one, grind it up small, add some salt and throw it all into the fire. John Evans also gave Elizabeth some water from the well, over which he muttered words in Latin and charged her 9 shillings more. Elizabeth was told to give her husband some of the water to drink over three nights, during which time he should read the thirty-eighth Psalm:

O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure...

¹⁴² John Rhys, “Sacred Wells in Wales.” *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1892-93, p.21 who cites Lewis’s *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, 1883 edition under the heading “Llandrillo”.

¹⁴³ Elias Owen, op. cit., p.12.

¹⁴⁴ John Rhys, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁴⁵ Francis Jones, op. cit., p.120.

Elizabeth also gave evidence concerning John Evans who wanted to put the name of the man who had cursed her husband into the well but Elizabeth refused to allow this and, from then on, the well lost its fame. Another well custodian, Shon Rhosemor, who was an old shoemaker who kept the well at Rhosesmor, near Mold, met the same fate at Flint Castle as had John Evans, the keeper of Ffynnon Elian.¹⁴⁶

Ffynnon y Cythraul or the Devil's Well in Caernarvonshire, Ffynnon Pechod or the Well of Sin in Anglesey and Ffynnon Angau or the Well of Death in Carmarthenshire were some other cursing wells. However, Ffynnon y Passg in Denbighshire went a step further as it was believed that taking and then spitting out three mouthfuls of its water enabled one to make a contract with the Devil.¹⁴⁷ St. George's Well in Denbighshire was used as a cursing well¹⁴⁸ and Ffynnon Gybi near Holyhead in Anglesey was used for healing, cursing and divination. The method of cursing used at this well involved writing the name of the cursed on a piece of paper and then concealing the paper under one of the well's banks.¹⁴⁹

Cursing procedure took other forms as, for example, in Pembrokeshire, near Llanllawer churchyard, where there was a holy well into which people threw bent pins to effect a cursing and straight pins to effect a blessing, while at Ffynnon y Gaer in Merionethshire, a pin was offered when enemies were cursed.¹⁵⁰ Ffynnon Estyn in Anglesey was once a baptismal well but it became a cursing well and, perhaps, the habit of throwing the pennies which had been used to close the eyes of the dead into it, *ceiniogau corff*, was related to the change of character. Other cursing methods involved impaling a frog with a skewer and sticking corks on the end of each skewer then floating the frog on the well water. The length of time the frog took to die dictated the duration of the curse. Slates with writing and wax figures pinned through the centre of the slate were also used to curse people.¹⁵¹

Holy wells were also associated with unusual practices, one of these being the use of rags as the picture below shows. The rags were pieces of cloth which were tied to the nearest branches of a tree or bush, and represented prayers, blessings, wishes and requests. People wanting good health washed in certain wells and then tied a rag to a nearby tree or threw a pin into the well.¹⁵² These objects probably represented the

¹⁴⁶ *Bye-Gones, Relating to Wales and The Border Counties*, 1888, Woodall, Minshall, and Co., Oswestry and Wrexham, p.178.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.117-118.

¹⁴⁸ NLW MS 8379.

¹⁴⁹ NLW Meurig Wyn MS, p. 131.

¹⁵⁰ Francis Jones, *op. cit.* p.118-119. Quoting the Ancient Monuments for Pembrokeshire, 1925.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 118-119.

¹⁵² Iorwerth C.Peatte, *Iorwerth Guide to the Collection of Welsh Bygones*, National Museum of Wales and University of Wales Press Board, 1929, p. 60.

disease of which the bather wanted to be rid¹⁵³ and worked on this principle: "If an article of clothing in a witch's hand may cause me to suffer, the same article in contact with a beneficent power may relieve my pain, restore me to health, or promote my general prosperity."¹⁵⁴ Rag wells were located in the counties of Caernarvon, Montgomery, and Pembroke but Glamorgan had seven such wells.¹⁵⁵ Edward Llwyd's experience in Disserth in 1689 with a rag well and an old lady at the well were detailed by D. Edmondes Owen in a 1910 publication which explains how rag wells were used.¹⁵⁶

Offerings at wells varied from "clothes, rags, pins, buttons, buckles, coins, ... thorn-points, flowers, stones and fowls."¹⁵⁷ Eggs were offered at Ffynnon Digwg in Caernarvonshire and horses were known to have been offered at St. George's Well in Denbighshire.¹⁵⁸



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The names of some wells bear testimony to the association of witches and the supernatural with wells. Such wells include Ffynnon y Wrach in Llanfair Caereinion and

¹⁵³ John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, MDCCCI, Vol. I, p. 358.

¹⁵⁴ E.S. Hartland, "Pin-wells and Rag-bushes." *Folklore*, 1893, p. 58-9.

¹⁵⁵ Francis Jones, op. cit., p.10.

¹⁵⁶ D. Edmondes Owen "Pre-Reformation Survivals in Radnorshire." *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1910-11, p. 106.

¹⁵⁷ Line-drawing by Jesse Parkin, 1998, from an original now in the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagan's, Cardiff which was brought from Llancarfan in Glamorgan.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Jones, op. cit., p. 92-93.

¹⁵⁸ ibid., p. 93.

Ffrwd y Wrach in the county of Montgomery, Pwyll Gwrach in Brecon, another Ffrwd y Wrach in Cardigan and Llyn y Gwrachiod in the county of Pembroke. Ffynnon Chwerthin in Llanberis in Caernarvonshire was particularly feared because it was located in boggy ground and walking on the earth caused ground tremors which were associated with witches and their servitors, the "old black men" or *hen fechgyn duon*.¹⁶⁰ Lewis Morris mentions Ffynnon y Wrach in 1733 at Cybi, Anglesey, and the name suggests that it was one of the wells connected with the Llanddona witches of Anglesey, the most feared witches in Wales.¹⁶¹ According to Jones, "References to wizards at Welsh wells are few. One wizard (*dewin*) who lived at Llwyn Ffynnon was said to have practised sorcery with the waters of the healing well of Ffynnon Fednant"¹⁶² in Caernarvonshire.

Holy wells were an inexpensive means of ensuring personal protection from the supernatural and witchcraft. The use of them remained personal and private, and control of the entire process was retained by the individual who, for a small financial outlay, had a direct form of ensuring personal protection for themselves, family and livestock. Empowerment of the individual was the end result as, in the face of a threat from a witch, the individual still had personal options, mechanisms of protection, with which protection could be achieved.

The actual wells were simple, usually without man-made structures or surrounds. The idea that holy wells were fancy, obtrusive and elaborate affairs is not borne out by the nature of most Welsh holy wells. The photograph below represents the more common variety of holy wells in Wales: small, personal and private, where the individual could visit unobtrusively and unobserved. Protection was achieved through dipping the hands in the water, making a sign of the cross on the body with fingers dipped in the water, and carrying some of the water away, either in a small container or on a piece of cloth dipped in the water. Possessing some of the water or visiting the well simply to pray and ask for a blessing was considered a means of achieving protection.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Francis Jones, op. cit., p.129. Citing Fardd, Myrddin (or J. Jones) *Lien Gwerin Sir Gaernarfon*, Caernarfon, 1908, p.170.

¹⁶¹ Elias Owen, op. cit. , p. 223 and Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales*, London, 1909, p. 208.

¹⁶² Francis Jones, op. cit, p.130 citing M. Fardd, op. cit., p.179.

¹⁶³ The ritual used was a matter of personal choice but the principle is much the same as that used today in Roman Catholic churches. Wales, after the Reformation, was subject to the same bans on the use of ritual protections using holy water formerly offered by the rituals inherent within the Roman Catholic church. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992 , particularly Part I: The Structures of Traditional Religion, B: Encountering the Holy, Chapter 5, The Saints, p. 155-205. and Part II The Stripping of the Altars, 1530-1580, p. 377-593. for an analysis of the continuation of the Catholic church rituals after the Reformation and the adaptions which people made to accommodate both the new laws and their continued need for church rituals.



The use of horses, especially horse skulls, as protective devices, whilst not common for all the counties of Wales, did occur although there is no reference to these in case transcripts. Buried horse skulls have been located in buildings in counties which have few, if any, records of witchcraft for the early modern period. Instances of the discovery of horse skulls have occurred in both Radnor and Brecon. Dolfor Hall, on the border of Radnor and Montgomery, underwent restoration in 1730, when the hall was 200 years old, having been built in approximately 1530. A vault under the paving in one of the big kitchens was discovered during the restoration which, on being opened, was found to contain four horses' heads which were positioned at each corner with each head facing towards the north. At the time, in 1730, "The only explanation that could be gleaned was that the heads were placed there, long before anyone living could remember, to prevent or counteract witchcraft, and that they were the heads of horses that had mysteriously died from the effects of witchcraft."¹⁶⁴ The theory was a local one and, whether the explanation was correct or not, "proves the survival of a belief in witchcraft among the inhabitants of Dolfor eighty years ago."¹⁶⁵

In Brecon, some years before 1926, the chapel at Brechfa was undergoing repairs and a witness¹⁶⁶ saw several horses' skulls which had been discovered in the ceiling being removed to the graveyard. It was his contention that the skulls had been placed in the roof because it was thought that they would encourage the preacher's voice to carry, although he was of the opinion that the reason was more likely to be related to the days when sacrifices made in the foundations were "supposed to give stability to a structure."¹⁶⁷ In all probability, the reason for the horse skulls had much more to do with the continuation of a customary protective practice for which there was no longer a local explanation.

Horses played a very important role in pagan religions as they represented fertility. The Celtic goddess Epona was the horse goddess, a role filled by Rhiannon in the Welsh tradition. Horses were considered to be effective protectors of the people and, for this reason, horse skulls were placed on the gables of houses in northern Europe "and horse bones,... have been found embedded in the walls of old English houses only recently demolished."¹⁶⁸ Gwynn Jones¹⁶⁹ cited instances of animal and horse cults in Wales, including the well of St. George, Llan San Sior near Abergele, where one horse was sacrificed in order to secure the wellbeing of all other horses by their owners and sick

¹⁶⁴ "Brecon and Radnor Notes" *Hereford Times*, 26th November, 1910.

¹⁶⁵ Ella M. Leather, "Radnorshire." *Folklore*, No. I, 1913, p.110 .

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Richard Phillips, (editor) *The Breconshire Border Between the Wye and Usk, with Notes, including a First Flora of Breconshire*, D.J.Morgan, Talgarth, 1926, p.103.

¹⁶⁷ ibid., p.103.

¹⁶⁸ E. and M. A. Radford, edited and revised by Christina Hole, *Superstitions of the Countryside*, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, 1975, p. 58.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Gwynn Jones, op. cit., p. 31.

horses were brought to the well to be blessed.¹⁷⁰

Burying the bones of horses was an ancient ritual amongst the Celtic peoples although the actual reasons associated with the practice are still not precisely clear.¹⁷¹ “At the turn of the present century, no less than twenty skulls were discovered when a new floor was being laid in a house at Jordanstone in Pembrokeshire, while horses’ skulls have been found under chapel floors,(notably the Beulah Congregational Chapel in Brecknockshire), beneath the choir stalls of Llandaff Cathedral, under the chancel steps in Steynton Church (Pembrokeshire), and under the floorboards of numerous lay buildings, including the kitchens and parlours of cottages in Cardiganshire.¹⁷²

Welsh customary protective devices also included one very specific procedure which existed throughout the early modern world which any individual could use to stop bewitchment : bleeding the witch. Sometimes known as “scratching”, bleeding the witch was an intensely personal way of resolving what was essentially an interpersonal conflict between the witch and the *malefice* sufferer. The witch had to be approached, face to face, by the person affected by the bewitchment who then had to strike the witch, drawing blood, and so end the bewitchment. The practice was widespread in England and the Isle of Man, although the Manx were a little less confrontational as they believed a slight scratch, elicited from the suspect somewhat surreptitiously, would suffice.¹⁷³ The belief was that the witch’s power could be broken if some blood was drawn as power was in the blood and, if some of it was lost, the witch’s power over the victim was also lost. ¹⁷⁴

Scratching the witch was a form of counter-magic which was not supported by the demonologists but which was publicised widely through pamphlets and accounts of trials. The usual means of drawing blood from the witch was to do so “above the breath,” that is, above the nose or mouth and often the forehead. The bleeding was considered to be effective only when blood was drawn above the orifices where breath was drawn and was not, usually, considered to be as effective if done on other parts of the body.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ ibid., p. 112.

¹⁷¹ See Miranda Green, “The Symbolic Horse in Pagan Celtic Europe: An Archaeological Perspective” in *The Horse in Celtic Culture*, edited by Sioned Davies and Nerys Ann Jones, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1997, p.1-22, especially, p.3-6. My thanks to Professor Helen Fulton, University of Sydney, for this reference.

¹⁷² R. J. Moore-Colyer, “On the Ritual Burial of Horses in Britain.”, *Folk Life Journal of Ethnological Studies*, Vol. 32, 1993-94,p. 62 Citing G.E Evans , *The Pattern Under the Plough*, Faber, 1966; Anon. *Folklore*, 12, 1901, p. 348; Anon, *Archaeologia Cambrensis Series 1*, xiii (1896), p. 354; J.D.K. Lloyd, “A Discovery of Horse Skulls at Gunley”, *Montgomeryshire Collections* , 61 (1969), p.131-34; R. Huws, Rhagor o Benglogan Cefflau , *Y Gehinen*, 28 (1978), p. 30.

¹⁷³ John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore*... , op. cit., p. 296.

¹⁷⁴ E. and M. A. Radford, edited and revised by Christina Hole, *The Encyclopedia of Superstitions* , Arrow Books Ltd., London, 1978, p. 60.

¹⁷⁵ George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, Russell and Russell, New York, 1929, pp. 47, 169, 236, 290, 428.

Blooding the witch was not a common practice throughout Wales as the procedure was quite localised, found especially in the counties of Pembroke and Glamorgan where English influence and Protestantism were more evident. Two witchcraft as *malefice* cases for Pembrokeshire indicate a possible dilution of an English counter-magical procedure, as the drawing of blood from Olly Powell was not above the breath, and where Elizabeth Browning intended to take blood from Katherine Lewis was not specified. When Olly Powell, well known for her muttered curses and demands for coal and food, refused to bless a sick child, who was thought to be ill due to Olly's *malefice*, and reiterated her curse, her accuser drew blood on her by plunging an awl into her hand. Olly reacted positively to this enforcement of the original request by saying " Go home, thy child is well again."¹⁷⁶

Elizabeth Browning had accused Katherine Lewis of bewitching pigs belonging to her husband, Richard Browning. When Katherine finally arrived, after numerous summonses, accompanied by her husband, Thomas Bowen, Elizabeth threatened her with bleeding : "*And thereupon this Examinant saying she would have some of her blood, the husband of the said Katherine having in his hands a hay pick saying these words ' If thou take her blood I will have thine for it for I thought of such a matter before I came hither.*"¹⁷⁷

The only other Welsh case found in the records which mentions bleeding or scratching the witch comes from Glamorgan. William Williams lodged an articles of misbehaviour case against Margaret, the wife of John Richards in July, 1730 at the quarter sessions for Glamorgan at Neath.¹⁷⁸ In this unusual case, Margaret Richards had spoken, in Welsh, to William's mother Rachell saying "*where is Will thy son who laid in the Ditch and that bewitched my Six Oxen that were on the Ground; where is he that I may have his blood for fear that he should bewitch them tomorrow again. I will have him hanged whatever it cost me...*"¹⁷⁹ The outcome is unknown.

Relief from *malefice* could also be achieved by burning a piece of the witch's clothing or some thatch from her roof under the victim's nose: as the item burned, the victim felt better. Evidence for this procedure occurs in court transcripts relating to a witchcraft as *malefice* case brought to court in 1657. The examination of Elizabeth Jeffreys of

¹⁷⁶ Bodleian Library MS: Ashmole1815 f.r.v. Letter written in February 1693/4 by John Edwards, then a justice of the peace for Pembroke to Alexander Forde, his Archdeacon then at Jesus College. The letter details the case of Olly Powell. If extant court records concerning the case of Olly Powell exist, these should be located in the NLW, Great Sessions for Pembroke1693/4 Sessions held in April 1693 (NLW, Great Sessions 4/800/1); OR August 1693 (NLW, Great Sessions 4/800/2); OR August 1694(NLW, Great Sessions 4/800/3); OR September 1694 (NLW, Great Sessions 4/800/4).

¹⁷⁷ NLW, Great Sessions 33/6/6 (1607) Great Session for Pembroke Katherine Lewis of Gumfreston, spinster, OR Katherine Bowen , wife of Thomas Bowen, a yeoman of Tenby.

¹⁷⁸ Glamorgan Plea Rolls (1542-1830) 1730 JUly at Neath. Glamorgan Quarter Sessions Roll Midsummer 1730 "c" No. 39.

¹⁷⁹ ibid.

Penley, given in evidence against Anne Ellis,¹⁸⁰ mentioned John Byrch (sic) of Overton Forren who had fallen out with Anne. Elizabeth's statement was very detailed: after John Byrch had fallen ill, "*some of his children or friends repaired to some persons for advise uppon his sicknesse, who advised the friends of the sayd John Birch to goe to the house of the person suspected should wrong him and take thence some of the thatch of the sayd house and to burne it under the nose of the sayd John Birch in case the person suspected would not com. And thereupon one of the daughters of the sayd John Birch requested the sayd Anne Ellis to come and blesse the sayd Birch, which shee refused to doe. And thereupon the daughter of the sayd Birch tooke some partes of the thatch of the house where the sayd lived and burnt it under the nose of her father who recovered of his sicknesse and became well thereupon...*"¹⁸¹ This was the only case in which such evidence was provided for early modern Wales.

The Welsh community had an array of counter-magical practices to which individuals could resort to curtail the *malefice* activities of the witch. These same customary practices also protected the witch, on the principle that every person involved, whether the victim or the witch, knew that a consequential response to any action would be forthcoming. When *malefice* activities became evident or were suspected, the victim confronted the witch and, through a conciliation and arbitration process, a reconciliation between the two parties was effected in the best interests of both parties. Case evidence shows that each party was aware of what was expected of them when it came to resolving the problems with which both were confronted, initially the witch, and then the victim.

Resolution between the two parties was not, however, always the result of this first counter-magical phase and tensions were not always diffused. Inter-personal harmony had not been achieved, the victim was still suffering from the *malefice* actions of the witch and the witch had not received any restitution or recognition of the wrong inflicted upon her. When the reconciliation process failed, the victim had to resort to other options, options which moved the parties concerned into the second phase of the antidote to *malefice*, communal intervention. This occurred when the individual responsible for harming the witch asked another to achieve reconciliation with the witch on his/her behalf. In other words, the Welsh people could either take full personal responsibility for counteracting the activities of the witch or they could pass that responsibility on to another person, the conjuror, who was paid for the task.

¹⁸⁰ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/5 Great Sessions for Flint (1657) Sessions for Flint 28 September 1657.

¹⁸¹ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/5/f.22v.

Chapter VII

Communal Protection, The Second Phase of the Welsh Antidote to Witchcraft as *Malefice*.

Evidence of another response to *malefice* was found in the court cases which indicated that, if a person did not want to initiate the reconciliation personally or if their personal attempts had failed, they could follow the communal response. This occurred when the individual responsible for harming the witch asked and paid another, the conjuror, to achieve reconciliation with the witch on his/her behalf. In other words, the Welsh people could either take full personal responsibility for counteracting the activities of the witch or they could pass that responsibility on to another person who was paid for the task.

If the person had unsuccessfully tried the personal phase and was still faced with the effects of the witch's *malefice*, or circumstances were such that the communal option was the first rather than the second choice of the victim, the communal antidote was accessed. Communal protective devices were options which required the intervention of a third person, one who would assume responsibility for the victim and undertake to resolve the victim's problem. Intervention by a third party was, however, more expensive because it involved consultation with the wizard or conjuror whose services were not free. The conjuror was the individual who provided the link between the personal and communal protective antidotes available to the community and was responsible for the creation of charm papers for individual protection.

The conjuror also had another, very specific role which involved communal responsibility as the designated conciliator and arbitrator in the dispute between the witch and the victim. His employment usually, but not always, resulted in a resolution of the dispute in which all parties were concerned. As the conjuror was part of the customary counter-magical actions which were available to enable a resolution, this second option still remained outside the jurisdiction of the courts in disputes which involved the magical and the supernatural. The Welsh conjuror's role was governed by concepts ensconced in traditional popular belief and expectations, in a manner similar to those surrounding the Welsh witch. According to popular culture, the conjuror was always a male and was often, but not always, the son of a witch, who was represented as the gendered balancing agent between the Welsh woman who was a *malefice* practising witch and the members of the community who had suffered from, the effects of the witch's *malefice*. Conjurors were not, however, always male in other areas of the early modern world. In Cologne, most were women as they were in urban areas of Holland. They were mostly male in the Netherlands and Saarland and rural Holland but nowhere were they only male.¹

Consuirio, consuriwr, consurwr, consierwr, consurwyr, were all Welsh terms used to

¹ Willem de Blecourt, "Witch doctors, soothsayers and priests. On cunning folk in European historiography and tradition.", *Social History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, October, 1994, p. 301.

describe the conjuror. The term appeared in the written record in 1567 in William Salesbury's *Testament Newydd ein Arglywydd Jesv Christ*² although the first written records concerning Welsh conjurors were probably those of Walter Map, a secular clerk who lived from c1130 to the first decade of the thirteenth century, who eventually became archdeacon of Oxford in the reign of Henry II.³ A friend of Gerald of Wales (*Giraldus Cambrensis*), Map's work detailed the story of the English knight Sir William Laudun who brought a perplexing problem to Gilbert Foliot, then Bishop of Hereford from 1149-1162.⁴ According to Map, Laudun told Foliot that "A Welsh wizard recently died in my town. Four nights later he came back, and he keeps coming every night, calling by name certain of his former neighbours, who instantly fall sick and die within three days, so that very few are left."⁵ Foliot told Laudun that an evil angel had probably reanimated the wizard's body and that the best policy to follow was to dig the body up, behead it, then re-bury it in a grave previously sprinkled with holy water. This proved to be ineffective until Sir William Laudun himself followed the corpse to the grave and beheaded the wizard, after which, no further disturbances occurred.⁶

Gerald of Wales, writing in the twelfth century, mentions "a certain Welshman called Meilyr who could explain the occult and foretell the future."⁷ Meilyr was a contemporary of Gerald's who lived in the neighbourhood of Caerleon and was sometimes resident at the church of St. David's. Meilyr told the future through his unclean spirit companions who personally accompanied him everywhere. Gerald maintains that Meilyr was proficient at short term prophecy although he was not considered accurate beyond the duration of a year.⁸ In the *Description of Wales*, Gerald mentions the Welsh soothsayers or *awenyddion* who went into trance states in order to answer questions arising from a consultation. The answer was always delivered in an incoherent and seemingly meaningless flow of words but, within the words, was the solution to the problem originally asked of the *awenyddion*. These individuals had to be shaken violently in order to regain their normal selves and could not remember anything concerning what they had said whilst in the trance. The gift of divination came through dreams and visions and, prior to trance, God and the Holy Trinity were invoked "and they pray that they may not be

² *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* Vol. I Part I, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1950, p. 553.

³ Frederick Tapper and Marbury Bladen Ogle, *Master Walter Map's Book De Nugis Curialium (Courtier's Trifles)*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1924, p. xiii.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. x.

⁵ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ii, 27. Translated by Montague James, London, 1923 *Cymrodon Record Series*, No. IX, Honourable Society of Cymrodon, p. 99.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁷ Gerald of Wales *The Journey Through Wales*, Book 1, Chapter 5, p. 116 of the 1978 edition, translated and edited by Lewis Thorpe, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, p.116.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.117-118.

prevented by their sins from revealing the truth."⁹

The term "wizard" does not appear in literary records and was not used in any English Bible translations before the King James version of 1611, a fact possibly related to the rise in the number and popularity of magicians in the sixteenth century. James I may well have used the 1611 translation to enhance his own efforts towards the elimination of practitioners of the occult arts from contemporary popular culture as, accompanied by his own previous publication of *Daemonologie*, his aversion to and interest in the magical arts was well known. The King James version of the Bible usurps the wizards' role as the wizards lose their former harmless and helpful aspect and emerge as representatives of evil and occult practices. "It seems clear that the King James translators zealously cited wizards in every pertinent passage of the Old Testament with the intention of delegitimising popular belief in them along with every other form of occult art, whether considered malignant or beneficial by the general populace."¹⁰

The dynamics of the investigation into witchcraft in early modern Wales is dependent on the classification of early modern Welsh magical practitioners according to the perceptions dictated by popular culture. If the society in which these practitioners existed had evolved a specific classification or categorisation of its magical practitioners, there is every possibility that each classification was accompanied by a specific framework of communal expectations designating the role of each group of practitioners. Early modern Welsh popular culture did, as evidence shows, have firmly designated roles for conjurors, individuals which other cultures, particularly in England, referred to as wise men and cunning men, and as the *Pellar/Peller* in Cornwall.¹¹

According to Welsh popular culture, the art of the wizard or conjuror, *consurio*, was practised only by men and there were three types of *consurwyr* or practitioners. The first were those who had sold themselves to the devil in order to acquire supernatural powers. The second were those men who were educated and had learnt their magical arts and powers from books. The third were those who had inherited the gift from their ancestors and these individuals were considered to be beneficial to society, consisting

⁹ Gerald of Wales, *Description of Wales*, op. cit., Book 1, Chapter 16, p. 246-247, quote p. 247. These verbal answers may have had some link with the origin of the written charm papers as the existence of charm papers has been dated to before the fifteenth century. Charm papers were also difficult to transcribe and seem incomprehensible to the reader as several languages were used and the meaning of the disconnected passages was not easy to discern. Author's concept - this link seems quite feasible and logical to me but I have no way of proving it.

¹⁰ David H. Hirst, with Steven L. Jeffers, "Wizards and Magicians in the King James Old Testament." *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol. VI, No. I, Spring 1991, p. 8.

¹¹ Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England or The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1881, Third Edition, p. 315.

mainly of diviners and white magicians. Jenkins¹² has stated that the wizard¹³ had three main areas of professional expertise which he performed in both his own immediate village community and in the wider community: health, theft and love. There was, however, a fourth role which was perhaps even more important to the community than the others; an intermediary between the victim and the witch, the communal protector, the second phase of the Welsh antidote to witchcraft as *malefice* in early modern Wales.

The conjuror, cunning man, soothsayer and wise man were all known as *y dyn hysbys* or *y gwr cyfarwydd* in Wales although the term *hysbys* (*hyspys* in the older form of the Welsh language) did have slightly different meanings in different counties. The people of Cardiganshire had complete confidence in the individuals who were classified as the second and third type of conjuror and these men were consulted in cases concerning difficult illnesses, melancholia and the loss of a valuable article.¹⁴ Cardiganshire popular beliefs concerning conjurors was, however, a common pattern followed throughout Wales. Glamorganshire people used the term to imply "shrewd" or "cunning" or "clever."¹⁵

The conjuror had to meet the expectations which the community had of him to earn his living and used methods which included incantations, charms, both written and verbal, and spells "to control the powers of nature, to compel the attendance of supernatural beings and to inflict injury."¹⁶ The conjuror, a worker of the magical who was credited with the power of ascertaining who had stolen goods from another, inflicted personal injury or injury to goods and animals and, importantly, the conjuror had an ability to control the devil and counteract the devil's activities.¹⁷ In short, the conjuror provided a balancing, counter-magical mechanism between the threatening elements of the *malefice* of the witch and the individuals within the community who felt threatened.

Depending on the requirements of the client, the conjuror followed a routine procedure: if an individual was not sure of the identity of the witch, he or she could consult the conjuror

¹² Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales 1642-1780*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff and the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 451.

¹³ Referred to in this work as "conjuror" as it is the author's preferred term and is the terminology used amongst the Welsh people.

¹⁴ T. Gwynn Jones , op. cit., p. 125-126. This exact (almost word for word) information is repeated by R.M. Evans, "Folklore and Customs in Cardiganshire." *Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society Transactions*, Vol. XII, 1937, p. 57.

¹⁵ John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx* , Volume I , Clarendon University Press, Oxford, MDCCCCI, footnote, p. 264.

¹⁶ D.R.T. op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁷ "The belief in conjuring was also formerly very general. The last professor of the black art in this parish was Mr. John Roberts (Sion Gyfarwydd) who was also a bookbinder, and who died from twenty-five to thirty years ago. Some persons may still be found who believe in conjuring." Robert Williams, "A History of the Parish of Llanbrynmair." *Montgomeryshire Collections*, Vol. 22, 1888, p. 326.

in order to ascertain the correct identity. Having established the identity of the witch, the client then had two avenues of procedure to follow as the client could confront the witch personally or the client could pay the conjuror additional money to confront the witch on the client's behalf. The result was likely to be the same whichever choice the client made as confrontation usually had the effect of initiating a resolution. The purpose of the entire process was, once again, the cessation of the effects of the *malefice* of the witch. The conjuror's role was to relieve the victim of the personal responsibility of having to deal with the witch face to face. Consultation with a conjuror cost money as he charged a fee for all his consultations and actions, which implied that the conjuror was consulted after the victim had tried the personal antidotes which had proved inadequate.

At this juncture, the counter-magical measures of which early modern communities availed themselves of, whether referred to as cunning man, witch-doctor, wizard or conjuror, are similar. The Welsh use of the conjuror as a counter-magical element, on the surface, indicates that the communal response differs little from that in other regions. Macfarlane's¹⁸ research for Essex and England also shows that finding the witch was a priority and this was done using private magic or going to a cunning man as well as burning something of the suspect's in order to make them appear at the scene, or asking a neighbour. This, however, began the process of pooling suspicions in Essex, a process which snowballed as the suspicious members of the village community went to the cunning man for confirmation of the suspect's identity. By this means a build up of communal reputation against the suspect was generated and obligingly, the cunning man confirmed their suspicions. The final stage in the process was an angry individual who decided to take the witch to court, accusing her of various activities, plus accumulated neighbours' testimony to support the court case, all of which "suggests that an individual first angered another and then, expecting retribution, suffered some misfortune."¹⁹

The situation was not, however, altogether similar in this regard in Wales, as *malefice* cases indicate that retribution was expected, an expectation which was confirmed when symptoms of bewitchment began. The difference in Wales was that the bewitched person's level of responsibility was far greater since the initial offence had induced the *malefice* actions of the witch meaning that the victim was, therefore, responsible for the affliction. This concept of the victim's responsibility was why the personal and communal antidotes were adhered to, measures which proved sufficiently efficacious that recourse to the courts was so infrequent. The dependence on and adherence to these customary practices amongst Welsh people set the Welsh response to witchcraft as *malefice* apart from the reactions of other early modern societies. Evidence for counter-magical measures used in other regions supports the contention that the Welsh approach was different.

¹⁸ Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England A regional and comparative study*, Routledge and kegan Paul, London, 1970 p. 109-111.

¹⁹ ibid., p. 111.

Thomas viewed charmers and cunning people and their use of magical healing as a reflection of the old belief in the curative power of the medieval Church, that is, through via prayer in formulaic patterns associated with specific curing.²⁰ The English formulae were almost identical to those used in continental Europe since religious language contained a mystical power which was of practical use and, essentially, the "wizard was simply a 'blessing' or 'charmer' who mumbled a few words over the afflicted part of the body, or wrote down the curative formulae on a piece of paper.²¹ A distinctive feature was the cunning man's willingness to attribute the cause to the supernatural, saying that the illness was caused by an evil spirit, a fairy or that the person was bewitched.²² Cunning men were used to locate lost property by using the sieve and the shears²³ which was only found amongst the Flemish incomers in West Wales during the early modern period but divination methods in England was done with the aim of encouraging the client to accuse the thief rather than identifying the thief since the identity was probably already known.²⁴ Intimidation of the suspect was the required result of these methods whereas the Welsh identification process was more precise. The witch had to be correctly identified in order to achieve reconciliation and removal of the *malefice*. In 1618, Jane Bulkeley of Caernarvon, a charmer, not a conjuror, was asked to identify a thief : she cut a cheese into ten portions, wrote a charm on each piece and gave a piece of cheese to each suspect to eat. The thief refused to eat the piece of cheese.²⁵

Suspicion of guilt was not sufficient, only through personal confrontation could conciliation and resolution occur and this made exact identification essential. If the victim had little or no idea who had inflicted the *malefice*, conjurors were used to establish the exact identity. Richard Bloom, of Carmarthen was consulted by Richard Lloyd of Cardigan to find who had inflicted *malefice* on his young daughter:

*The said deponent
at Another time meeting with the said Richard Bloom who told the said
deponent
that a woman of his neighbourhood being of Short Stature , which
--- throw dice upon a Booke, pretending to be a fortune teller, And one
that
had a pyde eye, had occasioned that sickness and deformity to the said
deponents' daughter And Charged the said deponent that when ever
he
met her to call her by the name of Witch not regarding the place to be
ever so publick. And the said Richard Bloome engaged before
witnesses
to -- has --- the said deponent from Any damage that he might*

²⁰ Keith Thomas, *Religion and The Decline of Magic*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973/1991, Chapter 7 and 8, p. 209-300 inclusive, quote at p. 210.

²¹ ibid., p. 216.

²² ibid., p. 219.

²³ ibid., pp. 253,254,255, 256.

²⁴ ibid., p. 258. Chapter 8 , p. 252-300 details the methods used by conjurors in England and the magical traditions used by such people.

²⁵ Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft in the Star Chamber* , Paignton, 1938, p. 16.

Incurre thereby and further deposeth not. ²⁶

The role played by conjurors in Wales was similar in most particulars to the role played by cunning folk, witch-doctors and soothsayers in other early modern societies.²⁷ Conjurors in Wales, as elsewhere, were specialists who were consulted in bewitchment cases where it was essential to establish the exact identity of the witch. Evidence for this can be found in Scotland,²⁸ England,²⁹ all over western Europe,³⁰ Bavaria³¹ and in the Jura.³² Specialisation within the conjuror group was also evident in other areas as Smith,³³ Sawyer³⁴ and de Waardt³⁵ have shown, but not so in Wales. As has been shown, Welsh people had three very specific categories for conjurors, categories associated with precisely defined roles with equally specific expectations.

The importance of the conjuror in relation to his role as a communal antidote to witchcraft, should not be underestimated. However, the exact role he performed, should not be confused with the roles of other mainly male but sometimes female practitioners. Early modern Welsh people did not regard conjurors as cunning folk,³⁶ healers or

26 NLW, Great Sessions 4/886/15. The witness testimony of Richard Lloyd in the case against K(C)atherine Rees, Great Sessions for Cardigan (1693).

27 These terms are used in other societies to describe the characteristics with which the Welsh associated the conjuror.

28 Christina Larner, *Enemies of God. The Witch-hunt in Scotland*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1981, p. 129.

29 Keith Thomas, op. cit., p. 648.

30 E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland. The Borderlands during the Reformation*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1976, p. 180.

31 Wolfgang Behringer *Hexenverfolgung in Bayern. Vol smagie, Glaubenseifer und Staatrason in der Fruhen Neu zeit*, Munich, 1987, p. 93.

32 Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief. Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 93.

33 Kathryn C. Smith, "The wise man and his community.", *Folk Life*, Vol. XV, 1977, p. 24-35.

34 Ronald C. Sawyer, "'Strangely handled in all her lyms': witchcraft and healing in Jacobean England.", *Journal of Scoail History*, Vol. XXII, 1989, p. 461-185.

35 Hans de Waardt, "At bottom a family affair: feuds and witchcraft in Nijerk in 1550.", in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (eds), *Witchcraft in the Netherlands 14th to 20th Centuries*, Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, The Hague, 1990, p. 132-148.

36 See Owen Davies, "Cunning-folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Rural History*, 8,1, 1977, p. 91-107. Elias Owen, *Welsh Folk-Lore : A Collection of the Folktales and Legends of North Wales*, Woodall, Minshall and Co., Oswestry, 1888. Republished by EP Publishing Limited, East Ardseley, Wakefield, England, 1976, p. 251.

charmers,³⁷ as these individuals were deemed by society to have roles which were very distinct from that of conjurors.

Welsh people had perceptions about to the roles and tasks associated with various types of magical practitioners, herbalists and healers. Each type of practitioner had a distinct group of tasks which were expected of him and these tasks differentiated one type of practitioner from another. Individuals who were regarded as charmers were different from cunning-folk as charmers did not diagnose, they charmed for complaints which had natural causes such as ringworm, warts, and toothache as well as for injuries which resulted from accidents such as bleeding, burns and snake bites. Charmers could be of either sex and were engaged in traditional rural employment, their gift had to be passed on contra-sexually if the inherited charm was to retain its effectiveness. Charming was regarded as a divine gift and payment for the services of the charmer recognised this view since direct payment was never given, payment in kind was the usual procedure and the patient did not say "please" or "thank you" during the process at all. Davies³⁸ suggests that payment was avoided in order to avoid prosecution for fortune-telling although this premise has little support when used in conjunction with evidence from other Celtic areas: a gift from God was not to be used for personal profit, the holder of the gift was obliged to share it with any who needed assistance.³⁹

The community held the charmer in high regard, a point illustrated by the reaction to the death of John Lloyd. John Lloyd or "Silver John" (c.1740-1814?) of Llanhilyn, was a late nineteenth century healer, a bone-setter who lived on a sheep farm near Great

³⁷ For an analysis of the roles and expectations Welsh people had of charmers, see: Margaret Eyre, "Folklore of the Wye Valley." *Folklore*, Vol. xvi, No. II, 1905, p.167. The author goes on to cite how a traditional charmer carries out the work, information she gained from Luke Page, a traditional charmer. He stated that charms could also be written "Oh yes, you can write this, or som'at from the Bible for they to carry about, but they must have faith." See p.168. Hope Hewett, *Walking Through Merioneth*, The Welsh Outlook Press, Newtown, Montgomeryshire, n.p., p. 63. D. Edmondes Owen, "Pre-Reformation Survivals in Radnorshire." *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1910-11, p.109. D. Edmondes Owen, "Pre-Reformation Survivals in Radnorshire." *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1910-11, p.109. W.H. Howse, *Radnorshire*, E.J. Thurston, Hereford, 1949, p.196. M.E. Hartland, "Breconshire Village Folklore." *Folk Lore*, 24, 1913, p. 506. Hartland is citing the oral history given by Miss E.E. Thomas who had it from Anne Thomas, the wife of the gardner at Llanthomas and a native of Llanigon who was born in 1824 and died in 1905 at 81 years of age. Richard Baker-Gable, *Hills and Vales of the Black Mountain District on the Borders of Brecon, Monmouth and Hereford*, 1976 reprint of 1913 edition Jakeman and Carver, Hereford, p. 58.

³⁸ Owen Davies, "Charmers and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century." *Folklore*, 109, 1998 p. 41- 44. Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999.

³⁹ Peter W. Nolan, "Folk Medicine in Rural Ireland." *Folk Life*, Vol. 27, 1988-89, p. 44-56. Diarmuid Mac Manus, *Irish Earth Folk*, The Devin-Adair Company, New York, 1959, p.176. Noragh Jones, *Power of Raven Wisdom of Serpent Celtic Women's Spirituality*, Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1994, p.139. Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England or The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1881, Third Edition, p. 315. A. K. Hamilton Jenkin, *The Cornish Miner*, 1927 edition re-published by David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1972, p. 272. A. K. Hamilton Jenkin, *Cornwall and its People*, 1932 and 1934 editions re-published by David and Charles, Newon Abbot, 1983, p. 2.

Graigau in the Harley Valley, part of Radnor Forest. He was murdered by persons unknown, his body found many months later under the frozen waters of Llyn Hlyn.⁴⁰

Charmers may have been relatively immune from prosecution but those who went to see such individuals were not always so fortunate. Elizabeth Wainewright of Hawarden in Flintshire was accused of going to charmers to be blessed in 1617 and mention was made of her visit to Chester for the same purpose. Richard Fazakarley of Broadlane was also accused, along with Elizabeth Wainewright, of going to Chester to be blessed by charmers in 1617.⁴¹

Communal attitudes towards fortune-tellers was, however, somewhat different. The diary of Elizabeth Baker⁴² provided a great deal of information relating to the continuation of traditional customary practises and law in Merioneth in the 1770s to 1780s. She commented upon the retention of the Welsh language, the holding of commorthas and the tampering with verdicts at the petty sessions, as well as the predilection of the clergy for alcohol. She wrote about a slander case in 1782⁴³ and the activities of a fortune teller in the town. Betty Johnes Morris, a fortune teller, accepted ribbon as payment from Mrs. Owen the Milliner's servant maid. It became apparent that the girl had stolen the ribbon from her employer in order to pay for the fortune telling. Of Betty Johnes Morris, Elizabeth Baker noted "She is certainly an infamous woman and capable of seducing poor ignorant girls - but with amazement I heard those who would be thought first class are foolish enough to listen to the prognostications of Betty Johnes Morris. It will be a meritous act if she's found guilty to rid the country of her."⁴⁴

Early modern perceptions of magical practitioners underlined the significant role of the conjuror but this individual in Wales was not regarded as a charmer or as a cunning man. Davies work tends to confuse the role of the conjuror in Wales with that of the cunning-man in England but court records for Wales do not substantiate such a merger of the two types of practitioner. Elias Owen⁴⁵ distinguished the types of magical practitioners in Wales: the malicious conjurors who had sold themselves to the devil, conjurors who obtained their power through the study of books and hereditary conjurors or charmers.

⁴⁰ Roy Palmer, *Britain's Living Folklore*, Llanerch Publishers, Felinfach, 1995, p. 143 and L.A. Simmonds, op. cit., 1975, pp. 22, 143-144.

⁴¹ The Peculiar of Hawarden, Flintshire, Consistory Court Acts D/B/J/1 (1617).

⁴² Thomas Ben Bowen, *The Old Order based on The Diary of Elizabeth Baker (Dolgellau 1778-1786)*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1945. For the most recent publication on Elizabeth Baker, see Simone Clarke, "Visions of Community: Elizabeth Baker and Late Eighteenth-century Merioneth," in Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke (eds) *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, University of Wales Press, 2000.

⁴³ Thomas Ben Bowen, op. cit., pp. 43, 44, 45, 49.

⁴⁴ ibid., p.51.

⁴⁵ Elias Owen, *Welsh Folk-Lore : A Collection of the Folk-tales and Legends of North Wales*, Woodall, Minshall and Co., Oswestry, 1888. Republished by EP Publishing Limited, East Ardseley, Wakefield, England, 1976, p. 251.

Only one of these groups appeared in Courts of Great Sessions records, those who were considered to be conjurors and whom Welsh society classified as those who had become conjurors by learning their magical arts through the study of books. People believed that such individuals could "thwart the designs of evil workers of every description."⁴⁶

Many so called conjurors in early modern Wales fell into this category as "Generally learned men were by the ignorant supposed to possess uncanny power."⁴⁷ It was this supposition which led to literate, well educated and clerical men being categorised as conjurors, which perhaps some of them were, and taken to court because of their presumed abilities and activities. Another aspect of this "learned tradition", as so often happened in Celtic regions after the Reformation, was when clergymen combined his religious functions with that of medical practitioner and the methods used were often very similar to those of the contemporary folk healer. Hugh Atwell was a medical practitioner as well as the rector of St. Ewe in Cornwall from 1599-1615 and, because he was successful at curing, could easily have gained the reputation of being a magician.⁴⁸

One of the most important communal antidotes to witchcraft in Wales was the charm paper. Conjurors were the only people who could create charm papers and were mainly consulted for the purchase of what amounted to a protective device which acted as an insurance policy for the purchaser. Deciding to purchase a charm paper moved the victim or potential victim out of the personal antidote phase, over which the victim had control, into the communal antidote phase, over which the victim had little, other than financial, or no control. The community also became involved when the threatened individual chose the option of the conjuror as the face to face nature of small village communities ensured that the entire community would be aware that one of its members had consulted the conjuror.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it was the creation of charm papers⁵⁰ which represented the most significant aspect of the conjuror's actions as the communal antidote to witchcraft, a continuation of traditional customs from pre-sixteenth century Wales to modern times. Charm papers were a very important option which could be used to counteract suspected witchcraft practices and the *malefice* of the witch. "Charms were mainly used

46 Elias Owen, op. cit. , p. 252.

47 ibid., p. 252.

48 Keith Thomas, op. cit., p. 328 citing T. Brian, *'The Pisso-Prophet, or Certaine Pisso-Pot Lectures,* (1637), p. 95.

49 Instances were numerous where a victim travelled many miles and sometimes into another county in order to consult a conjuror, the reasons having to do with privacy and the reputation of the conjuror to be consulted. If the problem was very severe, people travelled distances to consult with a conjuror who had a very wide multi-county reputation. Sometimes the victim went to consult a conjuror who was a "specialist" in the particular problem area which the victim was experiencing. Examples of these are the Harries and Jenkins families which are discussed later in this chapter.

50 Descriptions and pictorial examples of charm papers are located in Appendix III Charm Papers.

for protection against bad spirits and their evil influence."⁵¹ Charms were purchased from the local conjuror who wrote the charms on pieces of paper at the request of the purchaser and for a specific reason. Purchasing a charm from a conjuror could protect the purchaser from a spell he or she felt was influencing him or her and it could also be purchased for future protection against witchcraft practitioners. The charms worked rather like insurance policies as the possession of such a paper could ensure the continued well being of all members of the household and its generations, as well as all the family's livestock.

Charm papers were often placed inside small glass bottles, *potel y dyn hysbys*,⁵² the witch's bottles.⁵³ The charm papers for cattle were rubbed over the cattle a number of times whilst an incantation was spoken. The paper was then "carefully folded up, and put in some safe place where the animals were housed, as a safeguard against further visitations."⁵⁴ Charm papers could also be used to ascertain the identity of the witch by putting a pin through the charm paper until the witch appeared.⁵⁵ Following the principle used for witch's butter, the witch appeared and was asked to bless whatever she had bewitched. Charms were not always purchased for a specific problem, often they were purchased to counteract any evil which may be forthcoming, just as Thomas Ellis of Pen-y-garnedd near Llanfyllin in Montgomeryshire bought a charm annually by way of insuring against evil for the coming year.⁵⁶

The conjuror was regarded as an important counter-magical agent against witchcraft activities because the "very attraction of applying to a wise man was the assumption both of client and wise man that an effective remedy against witchcraft could be found."⁵⁷ Not only did an assumption exist, there was an expectation that a solution could be found through consultation with a conjuror. In many cases, the threat of consulting a conjuror was sufficient to solve the problem, particularly in the case of theft and the return of stolen property. An individual from whom an item or some money had been stolen made a general announcement at the alehouse or on a public occasion that a conjuror would be consulted in order to locate the lost property. Often this was enough to

51 D.R.T. op. cit., p. 146.

52 Robin Gwyndaf, "The Past in the Present: Folk Beliefs in Welsh Oral Tradition." *Fabula*, 1994, p. 253.

53 As discussed in Chapter VI Personal Protection, The First Phase of the Welsh Antidote to Witchcraft as *Malefice*.

54 Elias Owen, , op. cit., p. 269.

55 ibid., p. 249.

56 Iowerth C. Peate, *Guide to the Collection of Welsh Byegones*, National Museum of Wales and University of Wales Press Board, Cardiff, 1929, p. 61.

57 Kathryn C. Smith, "The Wise man and his community." *Folk Life, Journal of the Society for Folk Lore Studies*, 15, 1977, p. 32.

prompt the thief to return the stolen item and no questions were asked.⁵⁸

Evidence of the considerable faith the members of the community placed in the abilities of the conjuror, occurs in a slander and defamation case which was brought before the Courts of Great Sessions for Pembroke in 1783.⁵⁹ Dinah Reed, a spinster brought James Chubb of Narberth parish, an officer of excise, to court because she claimed he had slandered her by saying ⁶⁰ "I have lost twenty guineas and you are the person that took and had them. I am certain that you had my money for the conjuror told me so."⁶¹ Not only did James Chubb declare his certainty as to Dinah Reed's guilt because he had consulted a conjuror who had told him the identity of the thief, but Dinah Reed had no hesitation in bringing the case to court with the mention of the conjuror in a slander action against James Chubb, convinced of her right to clear her name of the slander against her.⁶²

Written records concerning some Welsh conjurors, their activities and their roles as communal antidotes to witchcraft, provide some substantial evidence of the influence and communal perceptions which surrounded such individuals. Wales had a number of famous conjurors, amongst whom were Arise Evans, Thomas Jones of Tregaron, William Jenkin of Glamorgan, male members of the Harries family of Cwrt-y-cadno, Huw Llwyd of Festiniog, Edward Savage and John Morgan of Llangurig. These men were famous throughout Wales but there were many conjurors whose fame was restricted to the local area as "Nearly every village in Wales formerly had its witch or cunning man."⁶³ The local community could approach these individuals for bewitchment and counter-magical activities against witches and their *malefice* but local conjurors were

⁵⁸ Elias Owen in " Montgomeryshire Folklore" *Collections Historical and Archaeological Relating to Montgomeryshire* Vol XXVI, 1894, p. 151-152 details a number of contemporary accounts of threats eliciting the desired outcome.

⁵⁹ NLW, Great Sessions 28/171-2 Great Sessions for Pembroke (1783) Sessions for Haverfordwest 30 August 23 George III.

⁶⁰ NLW, Great Sessions 28/171-2 (1783) sessions held at Haverfordwest on 30 August 23 George III.

⁶¹ NLW, Great Sessions 28/153, f. 404.

⁶² The case at the Devynock petty sessions for Breconshire in 1840 underlines the point that belief in magical and supernatural occurrences was retained by the community well into the nineteenth century. A 74 year old man applied for a warrant at the sessions against another man who was threatening to burn him because the man was sure that the warrant seeker had bewitched his mare. Not only that, the same man was alleging that the 74 year old man's wife could and did often change herself into a hare , a sure sign that she was a witch. The elderly gentleman was obviously concerned as to the other's intentions, so concerned that he was seeking a warrant to ensure the safety of both himself and his wife. (See Howse, W.H. *Radnorshire*, E.J. Thurston, Hereford, 1949, p.196). As late as the 1870s, a person on trial in Knighton in Radnor called upon Jones the Conjuror of Langurig in Montgomeryshire to come into the police court in order to cast a spell on the person who was testifying against the prisoner. (See L.A. Simmonds, *Welsh Legends and Folklore*, James Pike Ltd, St. Ives, Cornwall, 1975, p.18.).

⁶³ William Howell, *Cambrian Superstitions : Ghosts , Omens, Witchcraft Traditions*. Norwood Editions, 1972 Facsimile of the 1831 edition originally published by Longman and Co., London, p. 77.

not always consulted. Some people travelled many miles in order to consult famous conjurors and their reasons for doing so were varied: when they thought the problem was either too large for the local practitioners, or the local practitioners had proved ineffective, or the client wished to retain as much privacy as possible or when the client felt that the problem was so great that a solution could only be found with the intervention of a famous practitioner.

Arise Evans was one of the practitioners of the magical arts who came to prominence in the Civil War period for his prophetic utterances. Born Rhys Evans in the parish of Llangelynnin, Merioneth in 1607, he was variously dubbed as a charlatan and "student of the black art"⁶⁴ or, sometimes, as a visionary, one of those from the dark corners of the land.⁶⁵ Evans was generally regarded as an astrologer "whose perversion of the gift of vision brought him to a miserable end and ill-fame among his countrymen."⁶⁶ He was apprenticed to a master tailor at Chester, who gave him the name 'Arise', and as Arise Evans he was famous for predicting the fire of London, the calamity which would befall Charles I and the rise of Charles II. Evans wrote and published tracts from 1652 until 1656 and then again from 1659-1660, all of which were printed in London, detailing his predictions and visions.⁶⁷ He was most famous for his visionary exploits rather than his activities as a conjuror and probably suffered derision for his political incorrectness in unsettled times although he did achieve "a position of some influence with both the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, and he was summoned to treat Charles II for a tumour on his nose."⁶⁸

"Radnorshire has never been without its noted conjuror."⁶⁹ and the most famous of these was Francis Morgan of Llansantffraid Cwmdaiddwr who was as famous in eighteenth century Radnor as were members of the Harris of Cwrt-y-cadno family of Carmarthenshire in the early part of the nineteenth century. Francis Morgan was the conjuror to whom John Wesley referred in his Journal of the 13th August 1746. John Wesley had been preaching that day and had been approached by one of Francis

⁶⁴ Thomas Pennant, *Tours of Wales*, Vol 1,2, 1781, London, MDCCCLXXXIV reprinted in 1991 by Bridge Books, Wrexham, p.117.

⁶⁵ See Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1974, Chapter 2, p. 48-77, for an in-depth analysis of the activities of Arise Evans in London.

⁶⁶ Henry Thomas, "Arise Evans, the Welsh Conjurer." *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*, Vol. III, No. III, 1959, p. 280.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 281-183.

⁶⁸ Glyn Penrhyn Jones, "Folk Medicine in Eighteenth Century Wales." *Folk Life*, Vol.7, 1969, p. 63 citing *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*, Llundain, 1954, t. 204.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.111.

Morgan's "victims."⁷⁰ Morgan may well have been a family name associated with conjurors in Radnor as there is a record of another conjuror named Morgan who died in 1727. In the Parish Register for Presteigne burials there is an entry for an Edward Morgan of the Roddhurst/Rodhurst ⁷¹ community who was buried on 23rd June, 1727: "23-6-1727 Edward Morgan of the Roddhurst commonly called the Conjuror and resorted to as such."⁷²

Hughes the Dolphin was another Radnorshire conjuror from the parish of Llanigon who was known to have made a thief drop his stolen goods. The thief stole a stick/goose (depending on the narrative) and Hughes made the burden become so heavy that the thief could no longer carry it and had to drop the load.⁷³ There is an account of "a famous healer named Meredith (who) lived here who also sold charms." in the town of Llandilo Grabon ⁷⁴ (Llandeilo Graban). In Anglesey, the most famous conjuror was Griffith Ellis of Gil Haul near Waunfawr and he was an expert at finding lost items. Cures for animal ailments were another of his specialities. The Reverend William Jones stated "The offspring of the magicians and soothsayers have not yet entirely disappeared from the land. I believe a miserable wretch lives in the parish of Llanwndi, near Waunfawr, who is following the satanic calling of necromancy."⁷⁵

Glamorgan had many conjurors and a well known sixteenth century exponent was Twm Ifan Prys of Penfrydd near Pontrhydyfen, named Twn Celwydd Teg or Tom of the White Lies. His predictions were found to be true and caused him some problems as

⁷⁰ Describing the incident, Wesley said that "as soon as we came out of the church a poor woman met us whom Satan had bound in an uncommon manner for several years. She followed us to the house where our horses were, weeping and rejoicing and praising God. The woman told all around: "That near seven years since she affronted one of her neighbours, who thereupon went to Francis Morgan and gave him fourteen shillings to do his worst by her; that the next night, as soon as she was in her bed, there was a sudden storm of thunder, lightning and rain, in the midst of which she felt all her flesh shudder and knew the devil was close to her; that at the same time a horse she had in the stable below, which used to be as quiet as a lamb, leaped to and fro and tore in such a manner that she was forced to rise and turn him out; that a tree which grew at the end of the house was torn up by the roots; that from henceforth she had no rest day or night, being not only in fear and horror of mind but in the utmost torment of body, feeling as if her flesh was tearing off with burning pincers; that till this day she had never had any respite or ease; but now she knew God had delivered her, and she believed He would still deliver her body and soul and would bruise Satan under her feet." (A.H. Williams (ed) *John Wesley in Wales 1739-1790*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1971, p. 23-24.).

⁷¹ Alternative spelling in the records and modern usage.

⁷² My thanks to Mike Hall, editor of the *Cronici*, the journal of the Powys Family History Society, for drawing my attention to this entry submitted by one of the Family History Society members. I would like to thank Catherine Richards, Assistant Archivist, Powys County Archives Office, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, for confirming the details for me in 1998.

⁷³ W.T. Morgan, "A Few Folk-and Other Stories." *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, Volume for 1924, 1925, 1926, Issued August, 1928, p. 97.

⁷⁴ L.A. Simmonds, *Welsh Legends and Folklore*, James Pike Ltd. St. Ives, Cornwall, 1975, p.18.

⁷⁵ E.A. Williams, *The Day Before Yesterday Anglesey in the Nineteenth Century*, W.O. Jones, Llangefni, 1988, p. 283-284 quoting Reverend William Jones *Nodweddia y Cymry fel Cenedl*, Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1841.

Sir George Herbert put him in Kenfig Castle after he predicted that Sir George's son would hang himself. After the child was found dead due to strangulation by his own pinafore strings, Twm was released and given a sum of money but decided not to broadcast his predictions. Local people, however, continued to consult him about the weather and the outcome for their crops. Another prediction of Twm's was the death, three times over, of a young boy: the lad climbed a tree to steal some kite's eggs, was bitten by an adder in the nest, lost his footing and fell, breaking his back on a branch and then plummeting into the river below, where he drowned.⁷⁶ John Jones plied his trade in the Vale of Neath and surrounding neighbourhood in the late eighteenth century. He was imprisoned in the county gaol at Cardiff for a long period of time and was eventually persuaded to make a recantation which was published on 14th November, 1807.⁷⁷

William Jenkin, of Cadaxton-juxta-Barry, was perhaps the most well-known conjuror. His mother was Ann Richmond, of Barry in Glamorganshire, who had a reputation not only for witchcraft practices but also for shape-shifting or changing into a hare. Ann lived between Cadaxton and Cwrt-yr-ala, had a black cat, was an inveterate poacher and paid frequent visits to the local woods. "The gamekeeper determined to put a stop to this and, catching her one day making a meal of one of his beloved pheasants, shot her. On returning home he was taken ill, and after lingering for a time, died. After his death the image of a black cat was found imprinted on his back."⁷⁸ Mention of her reputation was made in the 1762 manorial court roll which outlined the recommendations being

⁷⁶ Wendy Hughes, *Tales of Old Glamorgan*, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst, 1994, p. 59.

⁷⁷ Cited in D. Rhys Phillips, *The History of the Vale of Neath*, Beili Glas, Swansea, 1925.

"Whereas I, John Jones ... under the pretence of a knowledge in occult science, have for many years imposed on persons, whose weakness rather than any knowledge of mine, had gained me an extensive reputation, as a Conjuror, and a power of fraudulently imposing on the ignorant, by pretending, through Magic Arts, and a knowledge, far surpassing all human conception, to be able to restore stolen goods to their proper owners, with other acts of conjuration :-

This is to acknowledge my total ignorance of, and disbelief in, such matters, and my concern at having so long imposed on weak and credulous individuals, being at the same time thoroughly sensible of the mischievous tendency of such traffic.

I hereby most solemnly promise never to be again guilty of similar offences, and feel myself extremely thankful that I am not to suffer the punishment to its full extent, which the law directs on such occasions, and I most sincerely hope that this my recantation may a check to the presumption of any person who might hereafter be inclined to exercise such vile acts for the purpose, not only of deceiving, but likewise pocketing the money of the unwary.

John Jones

Witnesses

The mark X of Edward Robert

T. Morgan

Cardiff Goal, Nov. 10(th) 1807

⁷⁸ Thomas Ewbank, *The Geography and History of Barry*, Educational Publishing Co. Ltd., London and Cardiff, 1921, p. 23-24.

presented by the thirteen resident jurors for better management of the manor, heard before the Steward, Christopher Bassett. One of the repairs suggested concerned

*"a Little Cott at the foot of Barry hill leading towards Porthkerry
(the home of Ann Richmond, the reputed witch) to be out of
Repaire, and just Ruinated: and ought to be repaired by the Tenant
in Possession or the lives in being...."* 79

Ann Richmond, William Jenkin, and their descendants all had reputations for magical practices. Although they were not brought to court accused of any form of witchcraft practices, they were, however, accused of other misdemeanours.⁸⁰

Communal views of this family were outlined in the *Diary of William Thomas*⁸¹ when, on 8th March 1763, he noted the death of Ann Richmond "Was buried in Barry from old age weakness, old Ann Richmond, alias Jenkin, widow, of Cwm y ci du, of 100 years of age, some report 105. She was the mother of William Jenkin the exerter. She was buried since the 30th day of January last and a Reported witch. All folks about dread her - and believe she could witch and the same belief is of her son, and tales of hurt she and son made to cattle etc. And the report is that the devil before her death appeared to her with a Bull's head and offered a year longer on earth if she at the end of the year would deliver her Body and all to he, which she denyed and dyed. Vain belief of the Vulgar, who are as credible of tales as the Indians and Negroes are, for the devil have not a moment atime to give any, nor himself, much less than a year."⁸²

William Jenkin was also mentioned by William Thomas.⁸³ William married Amy Morgan and they had seven children. William himself was accused of conjuring in Cadaxton by many people but, even though both his female and male descendants were credited with similar powers, William was not accused before the court for practising as a conjuror.⁸⁴ He was accused of taking money under false pretences and some of his land purchases were the subject of legal disputes but his reputation as a conjuror was always

79 Fonman Collection of Manorial Documents Court Rolls for Barry 1762-1767 Glamorgan Record Office (1762). (27th May, 1762).

80 Stewart Williams, *South Glamorgan a county history*, Stewart Williams Publishers, Barry, South Glamorgan, 1975, pp.141, 146.

81 R.T. Denning (abridged and edited by) from a transcript by J.D. Davies and G.H. Rhys *The Diary of William Thomas 1762-1795*, South Wales Record Society and South Glamorgan County Council Libraries and Arts Department, Cardiff, 1995.

82 ibid., p. 65-66.

83 Roy Denning, op. cit., p.154.

84 Stewart Williams , op. cit., pp.141, 146.

approached indirectly through these cases rather than by outright accusation.⁸⁵ William Jenkin had a son called Robin who was commonly referred to as Robin y Rheibwr, the Welsh terminology for a worker of magic. Robin was apparently well known for his many magical acts of kindness although he was quite capable of taking revenge on those who offended him.⁸⁶ Other members of the family were credited with powers similar to those of William Jenkin: "The Jenkin family in Cadaxton both in the male and female line have enjoyed a reputation for witchcraft for generations; and this present generation (1888) are still suspected of it."⁸⁷ William Jenkins' his nieces were reknowned "Doctresses", the sisters of John Jenkin of Gilhill at St. Andrews. Mary, Peggy and Jane died as spinsters and Jane, the eldest "was one of the first Jenkins to display unusual qualities which attracted local attention."⁸⁸ William Thomas refers to her as "yt noisome doctores", "the great She Doctoress" and "a very knowing woman with the Sick wounded."⁸⁹ Morgan Jenkin, another Jenkin family member, was brought before the Consistory Court of Llandaff in 1752 by William Williams. Williams brought the case against Morgan of Porthkerry because Morgan was practicing medicine without a licence. Williams was himself a licenced surgeon and physician,⁹⁰ perhaps the real motive behind the case was that Morgan's business was more successful.

William Pranch, a conjuror, died in 1763 and was buried at St. Georges and Edward Pranch, another conjuror, was mentioned after his brother William's death on 20th September 1763 in the *Diary* of William Thomas: "*Was buried in St. Georgis, from a long lingering disease, of about 60 years of age, William Pranch, brother of Edward Pranch of Nant Bran, a re-puted Wizard, and one that had word to witch things. His advice was much run too, for to heal cattle etc, that amongst the vulgar he was much esteemed, and had many gifts in corn, money, etc. for his sorcery, for he learned some verse of one Cate Mathew, late of Tregurnog of sorcery, and that was all his skill, for he knewed not a word on a book. A man that gave himself to drink and got his living amongst the vulgar by that decitfull way of sorcery. Also a great man with the cocks, for none would bett that side they found he against it. He dyed with Bess Anthony, his*

⁸⁵ Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkin, the Wizard of Cadaxton-juxta-Barry." *Morgannwg*, Vol.XXIV, 24, 1980, p. 31-60. The article concentrates on the financial dealings of William Jenkin rather than his wizard activities and posits that he may have accrued community resentment because he was an astute businessman who rose from humble beginnings to a wealthy position. There are many instances of William's court appearances and details of his real estate purchases but the issue of his wizardry is largely sidestepped. William Thomas' *Diary* provides evidence of the Anglicisation of witchcraft beliefs in Wales among the educated in the eighteenth century but these are not applicable to witchcraft amongst the common people in early modern Wales as the case studies cited in this thesis do not contain any references to familiars, paps, teats or the pact with Satan.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 34-35.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 53 quoting William Thomas' *Diary* entry for April 1889 (Cardiff Central Library Ms. 4.877, Vol. II) facing p. 210.

⁸⁸ Brian C. Luxton, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 38 citing *The Diary of William Thomas*, Cardiff Central Library MSS, 10 January 1763, 9 September 1768 and 27 November 1780 (when Jane died and was buried).

⁹⁰ Brian C. Luxton, *op. cit.*, p. 38 citing NLW LL/CC/G. No. 1096.

neice, in St. Georges."⁹¹

The Harries of Cwrt-y-cadno in Carmarthenshire were another family of magical practitioners which had a reputation spanning three generations. The first reference to the Harries concerned Harri Shon Harri or Harry Jones, the father of John Harries and the grandfather of Henry Harries. Each generation was regarded as being more astute magical practitioners than the preceding generation as it was Dr. John Harries and his son Henry Harries "who made Cwrt y Cadno something of a lesser Lourdes."⁹² Both wizards were respected and feared throughout West Wales, hundreds of people went for advice to these "astrologers, healers, detectives, psychologists."⁹³ The reputation of John Harries was very widespread as "People from all over South Wales used to visit Cwrt-y-Cadno to consult the great Astrologer, who pretended to tell fortunes, and to make witches return stolen property, and the people had implicit faith in his incantations which were to them as true as the Gospel."⁹⁴

Old Dr. Harries of Pont-cou or Cwrt-y-cadno died on 11 May 1839 and his son Henry died in 1862. Both men were trained doctors and John Harries "was a pioneer in the use of hypnosis, which he used with great success in the treatment of depressed and nervous patients."⁹⁵ John Harries was regarded as being excellent at autopsies and was known for his research into ESP although he evidently had sound business principles. "Allied to his interests in the occult was a shrewd business acumen. He found wizardry so profitable that he instructed his son in its secrets. Father and son insisted that consultations had a strict business foundation."⁹⁶

In 1905, Jonathan Ceredig Davies was permitted to search the library of Harries of Cwrt-y-cadno.⁹⁷ Davies found invocations for raising, that is, obtaining a good spirit and causing him to appear, and details of various accounts of Harries' spirit-summoning concerning lost cows.⁹⁸ Davies details the burial of Henry Harries, likening it to a similar occurrence which he heard related by an attendant at the funeral of another conjuror in 1873. The conjuror was buried at Llanafan churchyard in Cardiganshire in 1873 and the

⁹¹ ibid., p. 84-85. See also Roy Denning, "William Thomas of Michaelston-Super-Ely: The Diary and the Man." *Glamorgan Historian*, Vol.9 quoting William Thomas' *Diary*, p. 154. William Thomas was a schoolmaster who resided in Michaelston-Super-Ely in the late eighteenth century and who kept diaries containing many of the events which occurred in his own parish and St. Fagans, Wenvoe, Cadoxton, St. Andrews and Caerau.

⁹² Glyn Penrhyn Jones, op. cit., p. 62.

⁹³ Brian John, *The Last Dragon Pembrokeshire Folk-Tales*, Greenscraft Books, Newport, Pembrokeshire, 1992, p. 75.

⁹⁴ J.F.J. *Carmarthen Antiquary*, Vol.IV, Parts 1 and 2, 1962, p.102 citing John Rowland (Giraldus) in *The Carmarthen Journal*, 23 April, 1886.

⁹⁵ ibid., p. 75.

⁹⁶ Eirwen Jones, "A Welsh Wizard." *Carmarthen Antiquary*, Vol.2 Parts 1 and 2, 1945- 1946, p.48.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Ceredig Davies, "Ghost-Raising in Wales." *Folklore*, Vol. XIX, 1908, No. 3, p. 327.

⁹⁸ ibid., p. 329-331.

coffin bearers at both his and Harries funeral noticed that the coffins got lighter as they carried them towards the graves. The coffin bearers were convinced that the coffins became lighter because the Evil One had claimed the bodies.⁹⁹

Communal attitudes towards the conjuror tended to be very circumspect in Wales. The motivation of the conjuror was very self-orientated since he was selling his services. The community was aware of this motivation and attitudes towards the conjuror recognised that a conjuror would do what was in his best interests, whether in relation to his pocket or as a means of accruing power within the community by enhancing his own reputation. Caution was the operative word and communal responses towards some conjurors, emphasised this point. In early modern England, the conjuror was not popular because he knew too much about members of the community.¹⁰⁰ The same applied in Scotland where the healer became "a source of menace and a focus for anxiety" if he used his powers to demand too high a price for his services, or was a failure or became hostile.¹⁰¹ So too in Wales.

Legal records indicate that early modern Welsh people were not averse to taking conjurors to court. However, the conjuror in Wales was rarely brought to court in cases because he was accused of any type of magical practice. He was taken to court for reasons such as his exorbitant prices, or the ineffectiveness of his cures. If the conjuror stepped outside his community designated role, members of the community were quick to react. In Denbighshire on the 15th October 1570, Hugh Bryghan of Pentrefelin, was brought before the Great Sessions for dabbling in occult practices: he was accused of

⁹⁹ ibid., p. 331. The fame of these gentlemen was underlined by correspondence concerning them in *The Red Dragon* of 1886, most of which refers to Henry Harries. Helen Watney remembers hearing of him as a little girl as the Welsh servants often said that one of their number had gone to Carmarthen to consult the wise man. "The Dyn Hysbys had, they believed, the power not only to discover the name of the offender, but to inflict severe punishment on him for the offence." ("Queries," *The Red Dragon*, Vol. X., 1886, p. 282-283.). Beili Glas cites a story concerning Harries which occurred 30-40 years earlier (1846-56) and Arthur Mee contributed three stories related by Mee's father's friend to whom the incidents happened, in all cases the Dyn Hysbys found the misplaced goods. (Jonathan Ceredig Davies, op. cit., p 373-374. Jonathan Ceredig Daview relates many instances concerning the activities of Jhn and Henry Harries in *Folklore of West and Mid-Wales*, Welsh Gazette Offices, Aberystwyth, 1911, p. 230-264.). Many correspondents remark upon the existence of the Magic Book used by the Harries, a book which was padlocked, chained and hidden away. (Glyn Penrhyn Jones, op. cit., p. 64-65 offers further descriptions and information concerning the nature of the magic book.). "His clients were much afraid of this volume and the Wizard declared that he himself regarded it with the utmost awe. By the strict command of His Satanic Majesty, he was only allowed to consult it once a year and he was to do so in the company of a fellow wizard. Accordingly, Dr. Harries resorted annually with the book to a remote place in a wood, having with him another Carmarthenshire wizard, cloaked and hooded like himself. When they had drawn a circle around the place where they were standing, the two sages consulted the book. The inhabitants of the Vale of Cothi were always aware of the day on which the book was opened for a very severe thunderstorm, serrated by vivid lightning would pass through the valley." (Eirwen Jones, op. cit., p. 47-48.).

¹⁰⁰ Keith Thomas, op. cit., p. 290.

¹⁰¹ Christina Larner, *Enemies of God The Witch-hunt in Scotland*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1981, p. 138.

crystal gazing for the purpose of finding stolen goods, unsuccessfully, for which he was charging a small sum. Hugh was released on condition that he undertook never to indulge in such activities again.¹⁰²

A case before the Courts of Great Sessions for early modern Brecon provides detailed evidence of the expectations people had of the conjuror's role and what happened if the conjuror failed to accommodate those perceptions. Daniel James was resorted to because he was a magician, he lived at Llanafan Fawr (Llanavonfawr) and was indicted on depositions from witnesses in a case brought against him at the Brecon Quarter Sessions in 1789, by Griffith Daniel of Ystradveltey. The crux of the case was that Griffith Daniel was certain that Daniel James had defrauded him by pretending to exercise witchcraft in order to remedy the extraordinary appearance of the latter's cows.¹⁰³ Apparently Griffith Daniel had been having some difficulty with the quality of his cows' milk and Daniel James had said that he could cure the animals for the sum of 5 shillings. Griffith Daniel stated that James had told him that he could discover the identity of the witch who was responsible for the bewitchment of the cows by conjuration. No information was given concerning the fate of the cows, whether a witch appeared or whether the presence of Daniel James had achieved anything for the Daniel family. Initially it was Griffith Daniel who decided that his cows were bewitched, Daniel James only confirmed his suspicions and acted according to the expectations Griffith Daniel's had of him as a conjuror. Griffith Daniel eventually grew impatient at the lack of a solution and the presence of James in his house and, in an effort to regain his money, took Daniel James to court. What Daniel James was expected to do was unwitch, but the case gives every indication that Daniel James failed to achieve this. The testimony of Thomas Daniel, the son of Griffith Daniel, provided far more detail about James' conjuring

¹⁰² PRO Gaol files Denbigh 3/5, NLW Peniarth MSS 377B (Microfilm only). The case is located in a section entitled " Ecclesiastical confessions against the majesty of god." under " Sorcery " at the top of the page opposite p. 5 (only every second page is numbered).

¹⁰³ NLW Mayberry Collection, No. 4483-5 (1789). Brecon Quarter Sessions 1789.

activities than did the testimony of his father.¹⁰⁴ The result of the trial was unknown although the jurors presented a True Bill.¹⁰⁵

Conjurors in Wales were often the subject of court cases which, in reality, had little to do with their activities as conjurors or an inability to produce a result to the satisfaction of the client.¹⁰⁶ Men appeared before the courts ostensibly on charges relating to their practices but there were usually other underlying motives for the accusations levelled against them. In other words, the charges were an excuse for lodging a case against such men because their testimony was influential in a totally unrelated case then before other courts. Motives for the lodgement of such cases included property rights,¹⁰⁷ discrediting the accused as a participatory witness in other ongoing cases before the courts,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Daniel, *That he lives as a Servant with his Father*

*Griffith Daniel of Cwannant (?) in Ystradveltey, That in the Course
of last summer the milk of his Father's cows had very extraordinary
Appearance they believed it was affected by Witchcraft. That by
his Father's orders he went to Defendant at Llananvavawr who told
him the case. Defendant immediately said it was the effect of Witchcraft
and that he would prevent it. The next morning Def. looked into a
Book and then told Witness to take Cows tips somewhere off their
Tails, to boil the sauce with salt, while this was doing to permit
no Person to remain in the House but himself. Then he was to
Bury it by a Stile near a particular House, Def. gave
Witness a Paper to put over the door of the Dairy. For this Witness
gave him 5s. Witness went to him again Def then promised he
would be sure to set the milk to rights that he should see who did the
Mischief to it. That he again looked into his Book and described the
Persons of a Woman whom he said was the Witch. Def again directed
Witness to use the same Charm as before with the addition of two
Horseshoes having three nails in each of them. Witness then paid Defendant
2s6p. This having failed in success Defendant said he must be on the Spot
before he could Effect the Cure and fixed a time to be at his father's
House desiring Witness to inform the Neighbours of Defendants coming
and that he could tell fortunes and recover Stolen Goods. Defendant
afterwards came to Griffith Daniel's House and remained there four
Days during which he pretended by various means having generally
a Book before him to find out the Witch. He said there was a
conjuring Book of his at Glynllech which he would give 5 Guineas
to have restored to him.*

NLW Mayberry Collection, No. 4483-5 (1789). Brecon Quarter Sessions 1789.

¹⁰⁵ M.G. and R. Hall, "Prosecution for Witchcraft in 1789." *Cronic! The Journal of the Powys Family History Society*, Issue 42, December 1997. My thanks to Mike Hall for a copy of this work.

¹⁰⁶ See the cases discussed on the following pages of the thesis.

¹⁰⁷ Ifan ad Owen Edwards, *A Catalogue of Star Chamber Proceedings Relating to Wales*, Board of Celtic Studies, University of Wales press, Cardiff, 1929, History and Law Series, No. 1, p. 125. Montgomeryshire case of Thomas Powell against John ap Morrice David, Hugh ap David, Margaret verch Llewelyn et. al Star Chamber Proceedings (1594) P 11/2 (36) B.A.C.I. Dn.; Addit. P 31/17,B; P 64/7, C. Dn.; P67/20, C.

¹⁰⁸ See the cases discussed on the following pages of the thesis.

practising Catholicism¹⁰⁹ or Quakerism,¹¹⁰ and character defamation. The conjuror was taken to court, not because of his conjuring activities, but because of the knowledge he possessed regarding some other matter. Social status was not the issue, the case was about curtailing the conjuror's right, his freedom of speech as it were, to give evidence in support of a person involved in another court case. Many of the cases against conjurors sought to smear or slander the conjuror's good name and credibility, thereby creating uncertainty in the minds of the jurors and judge presiding over the unrelated cases. Discrediting and slander were the motives for many of the cases which related to conjurors in the Courts of Great Sessions and the Star Chamber as well as those before the Council of Wales.¹¹¹

Ingram refers to such cases as vexatious litigation , defining this "as the exploitation of legal forms to express aggressive impulses unrelated to the ostensible grounds for the action."¹¹² Whilst not using these terms, Gwynn Williams, analysed the differences between cases in the Court records concerning men in relation to accusations which may be construed as witchcraft related.¹¹³ He found that cases against men where it was implied that witchcraft may have been used, were often lodged as a means of questioning that man's reputation. In other words, the case was not specifically concerned with witchcraft or the accused's practices but with seeking to destroy his character. Gwynn Williams's research has indicated that such cases were often lodged against men because the accused was engaged as a representative or a character witness, in another ongoing but unrelated court case.

The link between the conjuring accusation cases and the other types of cases hinged on the inter-relationship between the two parties who were involved in the original, but separate, disagreement. The original court case had usually been of long duration and, seeking to finalise and resolve the issue in their favour, one party in the case became the accusers who brought the conjuring accusation against one of the witness's for the other party in the dispute. By such discrediting of the witness for the other party, the accusers hoped to influence the outcome of the case in their favour. The good name

¹⁰⁹ Ifan ab Owen Edwards, op. cit., p. 28. Brecon case of Thoas William against John Games, a justice of the peae, Howell ap Rhytherch and Roger Vaughan. Star Chamber Proceedings W 38/27 (38) B.A.Dr.; Addit. W 64/3, I. Dn.; w 69/19 B.A.C.I.Dn.

¹¹⁰ NLW, Great Sessions 4/787/47,48. NLW Goal Files for Pembrokeshire (1668). Humphrey Williams, a Quaker, was accused by John Canfell, a physician ,and Robert Lamton of enchanting and thereby causing the death of Hugh Lloyd, a shopkeeper of Havorfordwest. The transcripts indicate that not only was Quakerism an aspect of this accusation but that Hugh Lloyd was mentally disturbed and had been for some time prior to his death.

¹¹¹ These points were made in Sally Parkin, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Wales: The Counties of Merioneth, Radnor, Brecon and Glamorgan*, Gwyn Alf Williams Memorial Award for 1998, Submitted to The Welsh Academy, Cardiff, June, 1999, p. 6.

¹¹² Martin J. Ingram, "Communities and Courts: Law and Disorder in Early-Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire." in J.S. Cockburn (ed), Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1977, p. 110-134, at p. 18.

¹¹³ J. Gwynn Williams, "Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Flintshire." *Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society*, Part 1, p. 16-37 in Vol. 26 and Part 2 , p. 5-35 inVol. 27, 1975-76.

and reputation of the witnesses was paramount to the opposing party for a favourable outcome of the original case. Another aspect of the case examples which follow was made by Howells who points out that the gentry were not averse to flouting the law if it suited their purposes, particularly when it came to ruining a weaker enemy and his "dependents by means of protracted and expensive lawsuits."¹¹⁴ In the 1658 case of Henry John James,¹¹⁵ Ingram's point concerning the tensions between parties in a legal dispute affecting third parties, is emphasised. Third parties were required to take sides and the "fact that a witness's past life and character might be brought into question... kept old tensions simmering."¹¹⁶ In many Welsh "witchcraft" cases lodged against men, this would appear to have been more common than not. In effect, the cases were lodged in an effort to resolve a still ongoing dispute between two other parties and the man accused of "witchcraft" practices was caught in the middle.¹¹⁷

The case against Henry John James was heard in the Court of Arches, an ecclesiastical court of appeal,¹¹⁸ and centered around the claim that Henry John James had been defamed because someone had stated that he was a sorcerer and conjuror. The case was, in reality, a slander/ defamation case as the Court of Arches was used for defamation in Wales, and was not about Henry John James actually practicing conjuring. Whether Henry John James was a practicing conjuror or not was not the issue. The defamation case was brought because someone had sought to discredit his reputation in an effort to cast doubt on his suitability as a witness in another case before the Courts of Great Sessions. This defamation case was not about Henry's profession, it was about the veracity of Henry's conduct or misconduct and was being used as a means to end an ongoing dispute between two feuding families, the Hughes and the ap Gregors. The dispute concerned the ownership of a church pew and Henry was one of the witnesses for the ap Gregors.¹¹⁹ The defaming had been instigated by a member of the Hughes family and Henry was seeking to have his name cleared of that defamation.

The eventual victor in the dispute, Ralph Hughes, went on to become a justice of the peace for Flint in, 1641 and continued in this capacity for 1642, 1643, 1644 and 1647

¹¹⁴ Brian Howells, "Modern History." in David Thomas (ed) *Wales A New Study*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1977, p. 98.

¹¹⁵ Kinmel MS. 1078, University College of North Wales, Bangor. No 5-12 .

¹¹⁶ Martin J. Ingram, op. cit., p. 117.

¹¹⁷ Sally Parkin, op. cit., p. 6.

¹¹⁸ The Court of Arches originated from the Westminster archbishop's court of the peculiars which attracted appellate business from Canterbury province, a situation which led to the emergence of two separate courts of the archbishop in London - the original peculiars and the new appellate court. The appellate court became known as the court of Arches because it "was held in the rear portion of St. Mary of the Arches". See Richard M. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*, Speculum Anniversary Monographs, No. 7, (editors Robert Brentano et.al.) ,The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981, p.18-19.

¹¹⁹ J. Gwynn Williams, op. cit., Vol. 27, 1975-76, p.7-11 and his Appendix II , p. 28-30 for the case transcriptions.

but does not appear on the commission for 1649-1651. Hughes re-appears on the commission on 31st August, 1652,¹²⁰ and his tenure covered the entire time of the Civil War and its aftermath. During the years from 1649, such people as Lord Fairfax, Oliver Cromwell and others of the Puritan hierarchy were acting on the Chester Circuit¹²¹ and Ralph Hughes himself was acting as a sheriff from 1657-1658 for Flint.¹²² This was at the same time as a case was brought against Anne Ellis of Penley in Flint for witchcraft practices and it was the same Ralph Hughes who was the justice of the peace who examined Dorothy Griffiths for witchcraft in 1655-1656.¹²³

Landed gentry participants in land disputes were not averse to citing the supposed magical activities of their opponent when the case became too difficult. Such a situation arose between William Maurice and Owen Ellis of Ystumlllyn relating to lands in Tregerest and Treflyns.¹²⁴ Disputes between the Maurice and Ellis families over the lands in question seem to have begun probably in the year before or around 1603 as No.24 of the legal matters refers to a reply from William Maurice to a complaint by Thomas Ellis and others as executors of the will of Eliza ap Cadwalader and land in Tregerest. Maurice had brought an action against the Ellis family in the Court of Chancery. The matter had become more complicated by 1611 (No. 27) when a suit of Maurice v. Ellis occurs in the Exchequer Chamber. The matter was referred to common law and the verdict was in favour of the crown and a commission of survey was issued, after which, Owen Ellis then cited the jurors, witnesses and the sheriff before the Star Chamber. No. 28-37 detailed the ongoing court proceedings, forcible entries etc, by both men until, in 1618,¹²⁵ No.39 contained a petition from Sir William Maurice and 30 other defendants was lodged in the Star Chamber at the suit of Owen Ellis, on account of perjury, riot and other misdemeanours.¹²⁶ In No. 40, 1619, there was a breviate of Owen Ellis's bill in the Star Chamber against Sir William Maurice and others plus a summary of Sir William's answers in January. Point vi in Ellis's bill must, however, have referred to sorcery as Sir William's answers were set out thus: "*V. vi. Maintains sorcery. This he utterly condemns and abhors as most wicked; for his own part desires all witches and sorcery to do him the worst and the devil their master.*" The entire process continued until No.48, the outcome is not known. The whole case does, however, emphasise the length to which some participants would go in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

¹²⁰ J.R.S.Phillips, op. cit., p.110- 112.

¹²¹ ibid., p.111.

¹²² ibid., p.112 citing NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/6.

¹²³ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/2/18-19 Great Sessions for Flint (1655-56) at Flint on the 7th April 1655-56.

¹²⁴ T. Jones Pierce (Calendared and Edited by) *Clenennau Letters and Papers in the Brogyntyn Collection, Part I, The National Library of Wales Journal, Supplement Series IV, Part I, 1947*, p.141. Legal Matters (concerning the Clenennau Papers)

¹²⁵ ibid., p.142.

¹²⁶ ibid., p.143.

The Flint case of John ap Harry in 1620, was an example of an individual being slandered in a public place and before witnesses. It was stated that he was bewitched although the issue had little to do with whether or not that was actually true. The fact that the bewitchment declaration was made on the church step and before witnesses almost guaranteed a response from the slandered and dishonoured individual. At the Great Sessions for Flintshire in 1620, John ap Harry lodged a petition against his neighbours of Hendregaerwys, Robert ap John ap Richard and his son Thomas ap Richard.¹²⁷ John ap Harry claimed that Robert had declared him to be bewitched in very public place, the door of the Caerwys parish church, and before all the parishioners. John complained that he and his neighbours had lived peacefully but that his neighbours were constantly provoking him and generally behaving maliciously. In response to their actions, John was seeking to clear his name by lodging the petition. The case was part of an ongoing and unresolved legal dispute between the two sets of neighbours then lodged with the Court of the Council of the Marches in Wales. The dispute had been of considerable duration and was still unresolved,¹²⁸ a situation which may have encouraged Robert ap John ap Richard and Thomas ap Richard of Hendregaerwys to consider other means whereby a resolution in their favour could be achieved. Discrediting the other party in the dispute was the motive for saying John ap Henry was bewitched.

Evidence for the attempted resolution of disputed property rights and obligations through accusations of witchcraft practices and supernatural influences occurs in the case of Charles Hughes in Flintshire in 1691.¹²⁹ Hughe ap Edward of Llanhasa, a yeoman in the county of Flint, presented a written oath on behalf of his son, Charles Hughes, stating that Charles had become an undertenant of John Evans of Calcoed four years previously. John Evans himself actually held the lands leased to Charles Hughes as leased lands from Sir Edward Mostyn, a knight of Talacare, in the county of Flint. The lease agreement between Charles Hughes and John Evans stated that John Evans was to erect and build three bays of building for which Charles Hughes would pay 20 shillings. Charles Hughes paid the money in full but John Evans only erected two bays and refused to build another. Charles Hughes then went to see William Conway, the steward or agent of Sir Edward Mostyn and took the lands and tenement from William Conway at the same yearly rent as he had taken them from John Evans. This made Charles Hughes a primary rather than a secondary tenant of Sir Edward Mostyn's. John Evans was not pleased with this situation, having lost the outright lease of the land and Hughe ap Edward believed that this displeasure had led to John's wife Gwen visiting Hughe ap Edward at his son's house. John Evans and his wife lived next door to Charles Hughes and Gwen told Hughe ap Edward that his son should be punished, not defended, as she suspected that Charles Hughes had maimed her cattle. Gwen further stated that her husband had been to a fortune teller who told John that "*it was a*

¹²⁷ NLW, Great Sessions 4/977/22,23.

¹²⁸ NLW, Great Sessions 4/977/9/22,23 / f.23.

¹²⁹ NLW, Great Sessions 4/993/5/7-8.

neighbour one end of the first tree of whose house laid upon the chymney was the person that had maimed his, the said John Evans's cattle and that she knew of noe first tree that soe laid save in the said Charles Hughes his house and that therefore she suspected that the said Charles Hughes had maimed her cattle."¹³⁰

The case against Charles Hughes was dismissed on receipt of a petition signed by leading gentry figures.¹³¹ Hughe ap Edward's oath was accompanied by a petition to the Justices of the Great Sessions, signed by sixteen people. The petition declared that none of the signers had ever heard reports of Charles Hughes maiming cattle or harming his neighbours and that he was an honest and hard working man. In consequence, they felt that he had been wrongly persecuted by John Evans who had no just cause for his actions.¹³² Such overwhelming support from members of the community did much to encourage the fair resolution of such disputes which had recognisably underlying motives. Perhaps, as in Wiltshire, "the scruples of grand jurymen made it difficult to sustain a charge if there was any suspicion that the prosecutor was acting maliciously."¹³³ Charles Hughes' Catholicism did not dissuade any supporters either, Gwynn Williams makes the point that most of the signatures belonged to those men who were regarded as Protestant,¹³⁴ an example of what becomes very apparent in witchcraft as *malefice* cases, the efforts many members of Welsh communities made to support accused individuals.

The ability to conjure was often associated with educated and learned men, not necessarily because these individuals were conjurors but because their learning gave them added standing in the community. The community was of the view that such learning enabled these men, the second of the three practitioner categories, to assist in times of crisis and uncertainty.¹³⁵ Many members of the clergy were regarded as conjurors by the community, a juxtaposition of roles which sometimes placed religious men in awkward positions as the religious history of the county of Radnor elucidated. Old beliefs and customs surrounded the ability of the clergy to overcome evil "The old pre-reformation belief in the power of the priest over evil spirits is still deeply rooted in the minds of Radnorshire farmers."¹³⁶ The role of the wizard/conjuror in relation to power

¹³⁰ ibid.

¹³¹ NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/2/1.

¹³² The signatures of Will Hamner, Pyers Pennant, Edward Lloyd, Edd. Griffith, Peter Pennant, John Ffoulkes, Tho. Eyton, Tho. Jones, Tho. Lloyd, Eubule Wynn, Thomas Mostyn, John Lloyd, Henry Hughes, Wm. Ffoulkes, Jon Davies and Samuel Mostyn were appended. (NLW, Great Sessions 4/985/2/1.).

¹³³ Martin J. Ingram, op. cit., p. 119.

¹³⁴ J. Gwyn Williams, op. cit., Vol.27, p.5-6.

¹³⁵ T. Gwyn Jones, op. cit.,p.126.

¹³⁶ D. Edmondes Owen, op. cit., p. 97,101. Edmondes Owen cites the oral history concerning the spirit of Charles Lewis who was captured and re-interred by the actions of a group of clergymen in Radnor, p.101-103.

over evil appears to have been gradually subsumed by the officers of religion, both before, during and after the Reformation. Up until the early twentieth century, both conjurors and members of the clergy were operating side by side and the choice of who would be asked to perform the "cure" was in the hands of those who had the problem. This juxtaposition did not only occur in Wales. Catholic priests, as O'Neil¹³⁷ points out, were not only required for exorcisms but were also very aware of the expectations their congregations had of them. The Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century witnessed the rivalry between the different religious orders as Jesuits continued to practise exorcism whereas other orders abstained.¹³⁸ Similar rivalries also arose in Mexico.¹³⁹ The Dutch Protestant clergy, often previously Catholic priests, also continued to practise exorcisms and experienced pressure to desist.

Rollison's analysis of local society in early modern Gloucestershire¹⁴⁰ makes a similar point when discussing the Quaker and cunning man, John Roberts of Siddington St Mary.¹⁴¹ Roberts was regarded by his community as a cunning man or wizard, his gentry connections also giving him authority within his neighbourhood where his Quakerism added to his community's tolerated view of his eccentricity. Roberts' work was beneficial, he was "skilled in knowledge of people, usually particular people, their neighbours.... Their knowledge was 'substantive' and 'empirical' as opposed to 'theoretical', and they did not need the licence of the state to endow them with legitimacy."¹⁴² Cunning people were, as Rollison sees them, "the organic intellectuals of the proverbial culture, (and) were not professional, literate intellectuals, although they were frequently literate. And they were disliked and actively opposed by reformers on both the Puritan and Arminian sides of the elite... struggle."¹⁴³

Continuing the juxtaposition of the conjuror/clergy theme, although following a very different tangent, was a case in the records for Radnorshire concerning an individual who was indulging in activities usually associated with conjurors.¹⁴⁴ Whether the motive for the accusation was financial, religious or outright dislike of the defendant, cannot be ascertained but the nature of the defendant's employment does give an indication of the

¹³⁷ Mary R. O'Neil "Magical Healing, love magic and the Inquisition in late sixteenth-century Modena", in Stephen Halcizer (ed), *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, London, 1987, p. 102-103.

¹³⁸ Michael MacDonald, *Witchcraft and Hyseria in Elizabethan London. Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case*, London, 1991, p. xix-xx.

¹³⁹ Fernando Cervantes, "The Devils of Queretaro: Scepticism and Credulity in Late Seventeenth-Century Mexico.", *Past and Present*, No. 130, p. 51-69.

¹⁴⁰ David Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society Gloucestershire 1500-1700*, Routledge, London, 1992.

¹⁴¹ ibid., Chapter 7., p. 164- 196.

¹⁴² ibid., p. 190.

¹⁴³ ibid., p. 191.

¹⁴⁴ Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales. PRO Flies 1-1519. ECP File No. 1055/64-5 (1538-44). 1535 (?).

motive. Lewis ap Morgan, the parson of Aberedw (Abrede) had articles of information presented against him by Rice ap Guyllym/Rice ap Gwyllym ,Steward of the Lordship of Elvael, and Howell Morgan, also of Elvael. Lewis was placed in Radnor Castle, or the gaol possibly attached to the castle at Ludlow, on charges of superstitious practices:

"he daily frequentith him selfe for hiere of money to charme for horses, beastes and other catall that be syke, and makith writynges to set over dores where the same beastes shall entre into their succour at nighte, and makith holye water without any salte for them, for the which the kynges subgiettes daily dothe resort to him.

xx myles compass therabouts."

Also,

"he maketh writynges for younge children that cryeth in their sleape to hange about their neckes."

Lewis ap Morgan may well have been a conjuror as well as a parson since "the writings" referred to in the text indicate that he created charm papers for both man and beast. The defendant, in his answer, stated that he was dismissed of the above charges by his Ordinary, the Bishop of St. David's, and that, on his acquittal, the Captain of Radnor Castle, about whom Lewis ap Morgan had complained to the Council of the Marches of Wales, had had a writ of *sub poena* served against him. As a consequence of that writ, Lewis ap Morgan now found himself appearing before the King's High Court of Chancery.¹⁴⁵ The case was examined in detail by E.A. Lewis¹⁴⁶ and the Case of Rice ap Gwyllym versus Lewis ap Morgan, the parson of Aberedw was given in full in the Early Chancery Proceedings (P.R.C.) 1055/64-65. The transcript is in two parts as the first part is the Bill of Complaint of Ryce ap Gwyllim, the Steward of the Lordship of Elvael against Lewis ap Morgan, Clerk, the parson of Aberedw and the second part is Lewis ap Morgan's answer to the alleged charges. The case in the Star Chamber may have been one in which the litigants were using the Star Chamber as " a means of mounting flanking attacks on legal opponents..."¹⁴⁷

Court records for Radnor have few witchcraft cases of either type, only oral history can provide avenues which can assist in establishing what attitudes prevailed towards witches and witchcraft in the county. Oral history also gives details of the customary practices associated with both the personal and communal antidotes to witchcraft. The oral history also emphasises the community's juxtaposition of the clergy/priest/conjuror role in the face of the *malefice* of the Welsh witch. A farmer from the Carneddau hills had

¹⁴⁵ E.A. Lewis, *An Inventory of the Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales*, Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, University of Wales History and Law Series, No. III, 1937, p.181 and W. H. Howse, *Radnor Old and New*, Printex, 1989, pp.15,34-35.

¹⁴⁶ E.A. Lewis,"A Reformation Episode in Radnorshire.", *The Radnorshire Society Transactions*, Vol. IX, 1939, p.19.

¹⁴⁷ Martin J. Ingram, op. cit., p. 119 citing T.G. Barnes, "Due Process and Slow Process in the Late Elizabethan-Early Stuart Star Chamber.", *American Journal of Legal History*, VI, 1962, p. 226.

sheep and cattle which kept dying from some mysterious illness and he reached a stage where he had few animals left. Consultations with the wizards, charmers and neighbours of the district came to nothing and he went to the parish priest for assistance. The priest told the farmer to keep the carcase of the next beast that perished until the following Communion Sunday when the farmer then had to burn the carcase on a bonfire in the middle of a spacious wood at the time of the High Celebration. The farmer did all this and, after the fire had died down, all that was left of the beast was a heart which refused to burn. "While this was going on in the wood, a bent up old woman with a wizened face disturbed the solemn service in the Parish Church just at the time of the consecration of the elements, by rushing out with indecent haste. She made her way straight to the wood and was horrified to find what was going on. 'In the name of heaven', she shrieked, what beest thou doing ?' The farmer replied , 'and thou beest the cause of all my loss and trouble.'" The old woman ran away and was not seen again and the peculiar illness suffered by the farmer's animals also disappeared.¹⁴⁸

The case details customs which were very similar to those practised on the Isle of Man and in Cornwall for the early modern period. Among the Cornish, the *Peller* or the cunning man¹⁴⁹ recommended that one animal be put to death in the case of bewitched cattle. The blood was then caught in bundles of straw which were then piled high and burnt. The vast quantity of smoke produced drew the witch and the farmer would either see the witch or her shadow in the smoke. For ill-wished people, the *Peller* recommended the purchase of a bullock heart and a packet of pins. The heart was then stuck full of pins and the spell removed as the heart deteriorated.¹⁵⁰ Bewitchment cures for animals on the Isle of Man followed a similar principle as bewitched animals that had died were burnt in order to ascertain who had bewitched them. The burning carcase drew the witch to the spot but the Manx believed that the witch came because she/he¹⁵¹ had to gain the heart of the burning beast in order to retain her/his powers to bewitch.¹⁵²

English, as well as Welsh society, experienced confusion with the categorisation of a particular individual's role. Valentine Greatrakes, the Irish stroker, born in 1628 in Ireland, provided just such a dilemma for ecclesiastical authorities, divines and philosophers after

¹⁴⁸ D. Edmondes Owen, op. cit., p.103-104.

¹⁴⁹ The *Peller* was not called a wizard or conjuror in Cornwall but his customary role was very similar to that of the Welsh conjuror. In the early modern period, the *Peller* was always male but this had changed by the late eighteenth century as the *Peller* was either male or female by this time.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England or The Drolls, Traditions and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1881, 3rd Edition, p. 315.

¹⁵¹ Both men and women were witches in the Isle of Man and were called *butches*.

¹⁵² John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, MDCCI, (1901), p. 305-310.

his arrival in England, by invitation, in 1666.¹⁵³ Regarded by contemporaries as a deeply religious man whose cures seemed to have a religious content, he had no religious teaching to impart and was tolerant of all, even the papists.¹⁵⁴ Yet, "if he was not a doctor then he must be either a prophet of God, a fraud, or a demonic agent."¹⁵⁵ Eventually, it was suggested that empiricism should decide the status of Greatrakes' works and the Royal Society examined these throughout March and April of 1666. Greatrakes cures and wonders were vindicated in the report and, he returned to Ireland at the end of May, 1666.¹⁵⁶

A significant variation on the theme of cases concerning conjurors were those brought against people in positions of authority who knowingly allowed conjurors to practise. In a case from Glamorganshire in 1588, two men in positions of authority, John Robert ap Ieuand and Robert Adams, both Bailiffs of Cardiff, were charged with "permitting sorcerers."¹⁵⁷ The outcome of the charge was not clear. Two Flintshire men were prosecuted "for combinac'on and practize to Charge the plaintiff w'th felony by th advise of a wisard." The case was brought against Flint John ap Robert of Rhylyfnwyd on 8th November, 1623

*"Flint John ap Robert of Rhylyfnwyd at the suite of Bennett
ap Ieuau plt. by combinacion and practize to charge the
plaintiff with felony by the advise of a wisard (sic). 5
pounds.*

Another man, Kenricke ap Robert "of the same, for the like." was also fined 5 pounds and 55 d on the same charge.¹⁵⁸ Bennett ap Ieuau was accusing Flint ap Robert and Kenricke ap Robert of using a conjuror to ascertain whether Bennett ap Ieuau had carried out a felony. The striking aspect of the case was not whether Bennett ap Ieuau had committed the felony but that he had been so accused by others through their seeking the advice of a conjuror. In actuality, the case was a slander case as Bennett ap Ieuau wished only to clear his name, not to accuse any one of conjuring.

Ongoing attitudes towards the accepted roles of conjurors is shown the 1763 case of

¹⁵³ Eamon Duffy, "Valentine Greatrakes, The Irish Stroker; Miracle, Science, And Orthodoxy in Restoration England.", p. 251-273, in Keith Robbins (ed), *Religion and Humanism Papers Read at The Eighteenth Summer Meeting and The Nineteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Blackwell, London, 1981.

¹⁵⁴ ibid., p. 261.

¹⁵⁵ ibid., p. 263.

¹⁵⁶ ibid., p. 268-269.

¹⁵⁷ John Hobson Matthews (ed) *Cardiff Records*, Henry Sotheran and Co., London, 1898, Vol. I, p. 146, citing Kalendar (sic) 1587-1590, 30 Elizabeth 1588 Part I.

¹⁵⁸ BM Harleian MS 4220f.150v The Register of the Court of the Council in the Marches of Wales, 1617-1637 (1623). Also cited in Caroline Skeel, "Social and Economic Conditions in Wales and the Marches in the early seventeenth century, as illustrated by the Harl. Ms. 4220." *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1916-17, p.139. NLW Harleian (fol.150b) in the Harleian Collection, Ms. No. 4220.

Edward Rufell (sic). Even though the document records "witchcraft" as the charge, the evidence shows that Rufell was a conjuror. After the Witchcraft Act was repealed in 1736, the term "witchcraft" appears far more frequently in the case records concerning men for conjuring activities. The Glamorgan quarter sessions for 1719-1800 contained an indictment for witchcraft brought against Edward Rufell.¹⁵⁹ The case, after the initial hearing, was adjourned until 3rd August, when it continued. The activities in which Edward Rufell was indulging were those of conjuring, not witchcraft as *malefice* nor were the witnesses lodging a case for witchcraft as *malefice*; the case was about Edward Rufell's deceitful behaviour and charging money for that deceit. No further information

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Edwards Esqr

Clerk of the Peace 1763

The King against Edward Rusell for Witchcraft

William Griffiths

Hugh Jones

Adam Barkers } Sworn

John Richards

Griffiths Morgan

John Price

William Morgan

Theophilus Charles

Joseph Gariel } Sworn

Thomas Edward

William Bowen

Thomas David

Verdict Not Guilty

adjourned to the Red House in Cardiff on Saturday the 3rd day of August next.

Glamorgan Quarter Sessions - Subject Index to Minute Books 1-12, 1719 -1800, Vol. 3 - 199 under the heading Witchcraft Indictment for The County of Glamorgan , p.192.

about the case and its circumstances was forthcoming.¹⁶⁰

Cases concerning conjurors and their activities all centred on men as there were no cases in the records in which women were brought to court accused of undertaking conjuring practices. The court cases reflected the Welsh popular belief that only men could be conjurors; the cases cover a period from 1570 to 1789 and all used terminology such as "witchcraft", "charming," "bewitcher" and "magical practices," and evidence in witness testimonies indicated that an accusation for witchcraft as *malefice* was unlikely because of

¹⁶⁰ Glamorgan

*The Jurors for our Lord the King upon their Oath
Present that Edward
Rufell late of the parish of Langeiner in the said
County of Glamorgan Yeoman being a
person of evil name and Fame and of dishonest Conversation
and not mounding to get his
living by Truth and honest labour according to the Laws of
this Realm but com---ing
and devising how he might deceive and Misguide the liege
Subjects of our said Lord
the King and pretending from his Knowledge in the Occult
Sciences to know where
and in what manner Goods and Chattels were Stolen and
lost and how to be found
and recovered on the First day of June in the Fifth
Year of the Reign of our
Sovereign Lord George the third now King of Great
Britain at Glyncorug in
the said County of Glamorgan Falsely and Deceitfully did
pretend to one Jennet
the Wife of William Bevan of the parish of Glyncorug
aforesaid that he could discover
Where and in what manner two Wheather (cis) Sheep the
property of one Rees Howell
supposed to have been stolen might be found to the
Evil Example of all Others
in the like Case Offending and against the peace of our
said Lord the King
his Crown and Dignity. And also against the Term/
Form of the Statute in that
Case made and provided*

*Edwards Justice of the Peace
The Verdict was not Guilty and was discharged by Edwards J.P.
Pros. rs
Lewis David*

*Witnesses
Jennet Bevan
Jane Rees*

*Sworn in Court
True Bill*

the nature of the practices in which the accused indulged. The cases lodged against those who were conjurors in early modern Wales were not brought because of any inference of witchcraft as *malefice* activities, the cases were about overcharging, ineffective cures or were brought for reasons associated with discrediting the reputation of the accused in court. None of the men brought to court for conjuring activities or for inferred counter-magical and magical activities were executed for these practices. It is a contention of this thesis that accusations for *malefice* were not lodged against men because Welsh popular beliefs defined *malefice* witchcraft as being premeditated and intentional harming which was undertaken by women only. Following this premise, it is unlikely that such cases would arise in the court records because conjurors were not regarded by society as being practitioners of *malefice*. None of the cases concerning conjurors cited resulted in the death of another person.

The conjuror as the communal antidote was either successful or he proved to be unable to stop the *malefice* of the witch. Only at this juncture was the matter taken to court. As the matter was considered a criminal offence, the case was lodged in the Courts of Great Sessions, the third phase of the entire process which was available to the Welsh people in order to elicit cessation of the *malefice* of the witch.
