

SION CENT (1367? - 1430?), poet

Name: Sion Cent
Date of birth: 1367?
Date of death: 1430?
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Henry Lewis

Practically nothing is known about his life. It may be confidently asserted that his name was Siôn Cent although he has been called Siôn Gwent (e.g. by [Gruffydd Robert](#)), Siôn y Cent, and Siôn Kemp(t). He is also called Doctor in many of the manuscripts, but not in the earlier ones. The reason for these variants is that in the folk memory of Herefordshire and the marches he got mixed up with Dr. John Kent of Caerleon, who was educated at Cambridge and, towards the end of the 15th century, became famous for his wide learning; Dr. John Gwent, an erudite Grey Friar buried at Hereford in 1348; John Kemp, bishop, archbishop (York 1426, Canterbury 1452), and cardinal, who died in 1454; and one John a Kent, a mischievous raider who harassed the Marches in 1482-3 and whose exploits were celebrated towards the end of the 16th century in Anthony Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber*.

As far as can be judged from the few facts which can be extracted from his *cywyddau*, Siôn Cent wrote his poems between 1400 and 1430. He wrote a eulogy of Brecknock which at least proves that he was well acquainted with that part of Wales and that he had a liking for it. But the rest of the work attributed to him - much of it, there is little doubt, incorrectly - consists of religious *cywyddau*. His subjects are confined to the uncertainty of life and all that pertains to it, and to the inevitability of death and the last judgement. When [Rhys Goch Eryri](#) and [Llywelyn ap y Moel](#) were engaged in a discussion as to the origin of the muse and agreed that it was derived from the Holy Ghost, Siôn Cent intervened and asserted that the muse of the Welsh bards was a lying muse. Unfortunately, all that remains of this dispute is one *cywydd* by Siôn Cent and one by [Rhys Goch](#) in reply to him. It is reasonably certain that at least one of Siôn Cent's *cywyddau* has been lost. He sang of life and the world as he found them - pessimistically, for the most part, although he brightened up when he mentioned heaven. His *cywyddau* have one unusual feature, namely that they are divided into stanzas, the last line of each being the same and acting as the burden of the poem.

Author

Emeritus Professor Henry Lewis, (1899 - 1968)

Sources

H. Lewis, Thomas Roberts, Ifor Williams (eds), *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill, 1350-1450* (Bangor 1925), cxxi, cxxxvi-clxvii 182,

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H. Lewis, Thomas Roberts, Ifor Williams (eds), *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill, 1350–1450* (Caerdydd 1937), liii, lxii-lxxx, 181, 253-98

Saunders Lewis, *Braslun o Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg* (1932), 102-14

T. Parry, *Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1900* (1944), 144-5

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Siôn Cent](#)

Additional Links

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