

DWN or DON, HENRY (before c. 1354 - November 1416), landowner and rebel

Name: Henry Dwn
Date of birth: before c. 1354
Date of death: November 1416
Child: Maredudd Dwn
Parent: Annes ferch Cadwgan ap Ieuan
Parent: Gruffudd Dwn
Gender: Male
Occupation: landowner and rebel
Area of activity: Land Ownership; Anti-Establishment; Royalty and Society
Author: John K. Bollard

Henry Dwn of Croesasgwrn, Llangydeyrn, in Carmarthenshire, was the son of Gruffudd Dwn (also called Gruffudd Gethin) ap Cadwgan and Annes, daughter of Cadwgan ap Ieuan, and a direct descendant of Llywelyn ap Gwrgan, lord of Cydweli. Dwn first appears in the historical record serving in Picardy and Normandy in 1369 under John of Gaunt, the first Duke of Lancaster, who appointed him steward of the Lancastrian lordship of Cydweli in 1388-89. In 1394-95, he served with Richard II in Ireland.

However, by 1403, perhaps as early as 1401, Dwn had allied himself in rebellion with [Owain Glyndŵr](#). In a letter, in Latin, 'to our very dear and entirely well beloved Henri Don', [Glyndŵr](#) writes to 'command, require, and entreat' Dwn to join him 'with the greatest force possible'. While this letter may never have reached its intended destination, its message certainly did, for Dwn and his son Maredudd became important leaders in [Glyndŵr](#)'s southern campaign. In July 1403 Dwn was with [Glyndŵr](#), Rhys Ddu (formerly sheriff of Cardiganshire), and others when they took Carmarthen, and on 28 September he captured in the port of Carmarthen a ship belonging to the Llansteffan merchant John Sely. The stewardship of Cydweli had been transferred in 1401 to [John Skydmore \(Scudamore\)](#), constable of Carreg Cennen castle, and in 1403 Dwn thrice attacked Cydweli, with his son Maredudd and grandson Gruffudd ap Maredudd, though he failed to take the town and castle, even with the aid of forces from France and Brittany on 3 October.

In 1407 Dwn's lands were forfeited, and he was imprisoned at times in Cydweli and in Gloucester. Dwn benefited from the young Henry V's conciliatory policies in 1413, when he was pardoned upon agreeing to pay a large fine, and his lands and all the debts owed to him before the rebellion were restored. That fine, assessed against his grandsons Gruffudd and Owain at £266.13s.4d. in 1439, was never paid, and ultimately in 1445, long after Dwn's death, it was cancelled.

In his 'Conversation between the Soul and the Body', composed in the period 1375-82, [Iolo Goch](#) refers to three 'men of Cydweli' as 'princes of battle', almost certainly evoking Henry Dwn and his family. [Lewys Glyn Cothi](#) names Henry Dwn in a poem to Gwilym ap Gwallter, whose mother was Dwn's granddaughter.

Not unlike some others of his class, Henry Dwn could be heavy-handed and contentious, and he was often undeterred by legal proceedings against him. In the 1380s he had been prohibited under threat of a fine of £42 from challenging the possession of lands his father had given to the Priory of St. John's in Carmarthen. After his pardon in 1413, he reasserted himself as a masterful landlord, even audaciously levying fines against more than 200 tenants who had not supported him in the rebellion but who had nonetheless remained on his lands. Yet he in turn complained of the oppressions of now [Sir John Skydmore](#) as steward of Cydweli. [Skydmore](#) was accused of plotting Dwn's murder, and whether the charge was true or not, he was removed from office in 1415.

Henry Dwn died in November 1416.

Author

John K. Bollard

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