

REFERENCES TO SHAPE, SIZE & CONSTRUCTION OF EARLY WELSH HARPS  
Simon Chadwick 2008

Laws of Hywel Dda, supposedly first codified **mid-10<sup>th</sup>** century, but later embellished and surviving in **mid-13<sup>th</sup>** century versions:

Pob penkerd telyn a dyly e'r kerdoryon yeueyng a uynno emadau a <b>telyn raun</b> a mynnu [bot] en kerdaur keweythas a bot en eyrchat	Welsh Laws: The Book of Colan nlw. Peniarth ms 30 f 19v  Each chief harper should have from each young minstrel, who wishes to learn the hair-strung harp and who wishes to become a recognized minstrel and suppliant, 24(d) as his fee
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Sally Harper, 'Instrumental Music in Medieval Wales', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Vol. 4, 1 (Winter 2004) p26

also Records of Early Drama: WALES EDITED BY DAVID N. KLAUSNER 2005  
<http://www.archive.org/details/walesreedobrituoft>

**c.1240**, ape playing harp, St Mary's, Haverfordwest, Dyfed. HIGH RELIEF, BUT BADLY DAMAGED, **Irish shape?**

D. Roy Saer, Y Delyn yng nGhymru Mewn Llundain – The Harp in Wales in Pictures. Gomer, 1991

**Late 13<sup>th</sup>** century, St David's Cathedral, Dyfed, South Doorway (Macklin 2007 p.218) LOW RELIEF, **Irish shape**

**1309-27**, 'Awdl Foliant i Escob Bangor', about the harpers swimming to Anglesey

Agarw oedd glybod eigion – telynau O gau wisg fleiddiau, tannau tynion	Wretched it was to hear the hiccupping (SH says guts) of harps <b>Covered in wolf's hide</b> , with their taut strings
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A.O.H. Jarman, 'Telyn a Chwrth: Harp and Crowd', *Llen Cymru* 6, 1960-61 p.10

Iolo Goch (**c.1325–c.1398**), 'Cywydd moliant i'r **delyn rawn** a dychan i'r **delyn ledr**' ('Praise of the Horsehair Harp and Satire on the Leather Harp')

	'Once merry Wales / ... whilst there was time for minstrelsy / and the learning of the good old Welsh people' (telyn ledr), an "evil plague shaped like a bare bow." "jaundiced color, like a yellow mare"; its "bow-legged rough comb ... bent column ... the shape of its womb" "guttly sound ... of a nasty lame goose in corn, / noisy crazy Irishwoman." "column and its hoarse voice / were made only for an old Englishman." "It will be hard for an apprentice in a month / to string a brass greyhound bitch," "a curved-tipped nail, nasty thorn" "flanked by lightning on a stone roof" ("O du mellt ar do mai").
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Sally Harper, 'Instrumental Music in Medieval Wales', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Vol. 4, 1 (Winter 2004) p35

**1506**, Gresford church, Clwyd, stained glass PICTURE **brays, Gothic shape**

D. Roy Saer, Y Delyn yng nGhymru Mewn Llundain – The Harp in Wales in Pictures. Gomer, 1991

**c.1510 (1506-1525)** Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Dinefwr bed wood carving LOW RELIEF **Irish shape**

**c.1510-1520?** Cothelle Tester wood carving LOW RELIEF **Gothic shape**

pre **1523**, Ariandlws 3D SCULPTURE **Gothic shape**

**c.1533**, St Bridget's, Dyserth, Flintshire, stained glass PICTURE **brays, Gothic shape**

D. Roy Saer, Y Delyn yng nGhymru Mewn Llundain – The Harp in Wales in Pictures. Gomer, 1991

**1533**, Llanrhaedr Dyffryn Clwyd, stained glass PICTURE **no brays, Gothic shape**

D. Roy Saer, *Y Delyn yng nGhymru Mewn Lluaniau – The Harp in Wales in Pictures*. Gomer, 1991

Andrew Borde, *The First Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*, **1547-8**

For my harpe is made of a good **mares skyn**,  
The **stringes be of horse heare**, it maketh a good din;  
My songe, and my voice, and my harpe doth agree,  
Much lyke the hussyng of a homble bee

A.O.H. Jarman, 'Telyn a Chrwth: Harp and Crowd', *Llen. Cymru* 6, 1960-61 p.15

Siôn Phylip in a poem of **c.1580**,

**Wood, skin and hair**, lovely and complete the  
gift;  
Which with **bone** must be tightened.

Sally Harper, 'Instrumental Music in Medieval Wales', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Vol. 4, 1  
(Winter 2004) p35

**1582**, Araith Wgon

And in the glen he could see a hall, and he  
approached it. And he could hear the sound of a  
**horsehair harp**, and it being tuned. And from  
the sound and tuning he supposed it was noe other  
than Gwgon. And then Paun bach said, 'Hai how,  
is the room here for a tired horse to shed his  
fatigue...?' 'No,' said Gwgon, and he set down the  
**horsehair harp**.

A.O.H. Jarman, 'Telyn a Chrwth: Harp and Crowd', *Llen. Cymru* 6, 1960-61 p.9

Huw Machno, in a cywydd to Robert ap Huw (**c. 1600?**)

Ceimion **wrachiod** cymwys  
Yn siarad pob teimlad dwys

bent appropriate **brays**  
speaking every profound feeling

William Taylor, *Two Worlds of the Welsh Harp*, Dorian DOR-90260, 1999, p.9.

**1605-10**, MS Hafod 24 (see Harper 2007 p52) LINE DRAWING **?Gothic Shape?**

**c. 1690**, James Talbot ms.

HARP. WELCH. (description of a stave-back single harp)...

Single harp carries from 31 to 34 natural keys. this English harp whereas Welch harp flatt shallow back with Brays: it carried 34 strings

Welch bray harp body 3f. 6' of Holly. back Oak. Bow 4f. 7' Maple. ill shap'd shallow body dug out of one piece and back put in afterwards.

...

WELCH OR BRAY HARP

The proper Welch harp's Body (whose Belly is made entirely out of one piece) made of Holly, its back of Flatt Oak, Bow and Head Maple.

It carries usually 34 single gutt strings if long, otherwise 31.

From ΓΓ to eee=34. From AA to ccc=31.

Strings fastened at the belly by Brays instead of round buttons which give it a jarry sound.

In this and all single Harps the strings are on the players left hand the heads of pins (by which tun'd) on his right, whereas in the Triple harp to the contrary.

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WELCH HARP

...description of stave back single harp...

but the jarring bray harp has at the head of each button a cog or bray >> against which the string bears and jars: this is the true English harp.

Joan Rimmer, GJSJ 16, 1963

**1784** Jones, *Musical & Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards*, 1803 edition, p.103

I am informed by Mr William Williams, that when a boy, he had an old **leathern harp**, which he used to play upon. The body of it was hollowed, or scooped, out of a piece of wood, and covered over with an **ox's skin**, which was sewed extremely tight at the back; and the pegs, which the strings were screwed with, were made of bone, or ivory.

Thomas Price, ms notebook (**1840**). gwrachiod (**brays**) made of thorn twig.