

# Wizards or Charlatans Doctors or Herbalists?

An Appraisal of the "Cunning Men" of  
Cwrt Y Cadno, Camarthenshire



**Richard C. Allen**

## Wizards or Charlatans - Doctors or Herbalists?: An Appraisal of the "Cunning Men" of Cwrt Y Cadno, Carmarthenshire

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Recently there has been a renewed spate of academic interest in witchcraft and magic, notably in the work of Tim Harris, Jim Sharpe, Kathryn Smith, Ronald Hutton and Owen Davies.<sup>1</sup> Their desire to comprehend popular beliefs has not always been shared as the following report from Yr Haul in 1840 suggests: "Because men insist on being foolish, they are left to consult Dr. Harries, Cwrtycadno, and go to expense on account of his lies and deceit... he should be arrested and set on a tread mill for a few months, as happens to his fellow deceivers in England."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in 1889, John Rowland ('Giraldus') of Cardiff observed that Dr. Harries was "a conjurer, fortune-teller, and quack doctor... He gulled the credulous for many years and reaped a bountiful harvest."<sup>3</sup> A more objective opinion was voiced by Arthur Mee in 1912: "A wholesome scepticism is good, but the spirit of wholesale uncompromising disbelief is out of place in an age when things are admitted by leading scientists and others to be true... mesmerism, or clairvoyance, or crystal-gazing, or the divining-rod... are now ascertained facts, and after long ostracism, are once again coming to their own."<sup>4</sup> In our modern and fast moving world there is a concentration upon

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Bob Bushaway, "Tacit, Unsuspected, but Still Implicit Faith: Alternative Belief in Nineteenth Century Rural England" in T. Harris, *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1800* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995); James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness. Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kathryn C. Smith, "The Wise Man and His Community," *Folk Life*, 15 (1977): 24-37; Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon. A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Owen Davies, 'Witchcraft: The Spell That Didn't Break', *History Today*, (August 1999): 7-13.; In his Ph.D. thesis Dr. Owen explains the historiographical reasons why so little research has been undertaken on witchcraft and magic from the eighteenth century onwards. He suggests that "British historians need to embrace a more flexible approach in order to gain a better understanding of popular mentalities." See Owen Davies, "The Decline in the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic," unpublished University of Lancaster Ph.D. thesis, 1995, abstract, ch.1.

<sup>2</sup> Anon. ('Brutus?'), "Cwrt y Cadno," *Yr Haul*, 5 (1840): 286.; The original Welsh editorial is as follows: "*ond gan y myn dynion fod yn ffyliad, nid oes ond gadael iddynt ymgynghori a Mr. Harris, Cwrtycadno, a myned i draul ar bwys ei gelwydd a'i dwyll. Y mae yn waeth na lleidr ei fod yn twyllo dynion fel y mae; ac y mae eisiau tost i'w gael i afael y gyfraith a rhoddi 'tread-mill' iddo am ychydig o fisoedd, fel y gwneir a'i gyd-dwyllwyr yn Lloegr.*" Also provided in K. Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd Y Dyn Hysbys - Swyngfaredd yng Nghymru* (Talybont, Y Lolfa, 1977), 15; It is worth noting that modern academics have also shied away from the study of witchcraft and magic, and as Owen Davies has noted these studies were "not a reluctant or even a valid field of research for the modern historian."; See Owen Davies, "The Decline in the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic", 1; And cited in R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 84.

<sup>3</sup> J. Rowland ('Giraldus'), "Dr. Harries Court y Cadno, The Carmarthenshire Conjurer," in Arthur Mee (ed.), *Carmarthenshire Notes. Antiquarian, Topographical, and Curious*, I (1889): 29; See also MS. 11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire. The Harrieses of Cwrt y Cadno* (Llanely, 1912), p.11.

<sup>4</sup> MS. 11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, p.1.

technological progress with up to the minute information and news from all parts of the globe. It is easy to communicate from a small rural village in Wales with a person in a large American city, and one does not feel awe-struck by the magnitude of the distance covered and the technology employed. Indeed, as the third millennium has now arrived it is remarkable how the world has advanced. While many people believe that continuous advances in technology are the only way forward, others have taken a contrary view. Many more people are looking for alternative answers from 'new age' practices, including astrology, herbalism, aromatherapy and the like. But, of course, these practices are not really so 'new'. For one nineteenth century family, the Harrieses of Cwrt y Cadno, they were commonplace.<sup>5</sup>

For many people today it can be difficult to imagine a time when magic and witchcraft was common. Indeed, it is difficult to comprehend a period when those people who did not conform to society's norms were not ostracized, as they tend to be now, but indeed revered for their peculiarities. Sheltered in the Cothi Valley in Carmarthenshire is the hamlet of Cwrt y Cadno. Here folk remedies and more conventional forms of medicine were intertwined one with the other. In this community, John and Henry Harries, acknowledged doctors, were regarded as "the Wizards of Cwrt y Cadno," and were striking exponents of "low magic" in nineteenth century Wales. Now that a new millennium has dawned it is perhaps appropriate to re-evaluate the worth of such a phenomenon as the Harries family.

To ridicule popular beliefs which were prominent in rural communities, although aspects of folklore and traditional popular activity certainly did permeate urban life as well, is to ignore the presence of magic and witchcraft which existed in Wales and elsewhere in Britain for many centuries.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, individuals who indulged in arcane practices were often believed to be beneficial to society and were regularly consulted, and most communities had their own particular "wise" or "cunning man." Ronald Hutton has recently categorized the different representations of "popular experience and beliefs," suggesting that there were three basic forms: first, the classical witch figure who existed in the supernatural world of fairies and hobgoblins; next, those accused of practising witchcraft or magic or at least suspected of having done so; third, those who claimed to have magical powers. This final category can be subdivided between those who expressed magical gifts, but did not provide a community service, and others who assisted their communities. This second group of "practitioners" consisted of "charmners" of ailments, fortune-tellers or diviners, and were

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<sup>5</sup> See William Bottrell, Cornish Witches and Cunning Men, (Penzance, 1996); Owen Davies, "The Decline in the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic"; Idem., "Cunning Folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Rural History, 8 (1997): 91-107; Idem., "Charmers and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century," Folklore, 109 (1998): 41-52; Idem., Witchcraft, Magic and Culture (Manchester, 1999); R. Hutton, Triumph of the Moon, 86ff.; For comparative purposes, see the various conjurors recorded in Brian Luxton, "William Jenkin, the Wizard of Cadoxton-juxta-Barry," Morgannwg, XXIV (1980): 31-60.

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Revd. Edmund Jones, A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the County of Monmouth and the Principality of Wales (Newport, 1813); The Harries family also rank alongside the physicians of Myddfai in Carmarthenshire who practised their art from the tenth century through to the nineteenth century, or the Brahan Seer in the highlands of Scotland in the eighteenth century. See Revd. John Williams ab Ithel (ed.), The Physicians of Myddfai, trans. ed.(London, 1861)

given the titles of "white-witch," "wise-man" or "wise-woman," "wizard," "conjurer" or in Wales the "*dyn hysbys*."<sup>7</sup>

John (c.1785-1839), and Henry Gwynne Harries (1821-49), father and son, were astrologers and doctors from the Pantcoy Estate in Cwrt y Cadno.<sup>8</sup> John Harries, the eldest son of a prosperous yeoman,<sup>9</sup> was born in 1785, possibly at Pantcoy.<sup>10</sup> He received a good education, and qualified as a surgeon before returning to Wales.<sup>11</sup> It is not known where he studied medicine,<sup>12</sup> but it is believed that he later became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons at Edinburgh where he gave lectures to the students.<sup>13</sup> John Harries has been described as 6 feet 2 inches tall, well built in middle age, with:

Short dark hair... Mutton-chops sideboards. Medium sized forehead. Very straight nose. Mouth wide, slight jaws. At 53 years of age, beginning of a double chin. Blue, wistful thinking eyes.<sup>14</sup>

He was also "a countrified man, in countrified attire, with knee breeches, always cheerful, bright of eye and pleasant of speech."<sup>15</sup> It has been claimed that he married Elizabeth Emily

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<sup>7</sup> R. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 84-6; See also Glanffrwd Thomas, "The Witches of the Southern Counties of Wales," *Cymru Fu* (10 March 1888): 112-18; Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkin," 34; Owen Davies, "Charmers and Charming," 41; Idem., "Cunning Folk," 91-2; Bottrell, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, 214-16.

<sup>8</sup> A description of the first and second Pantcoy and details of the history of the Harries family are provided in Ithiel Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom - Wizards of Cwrt y Cadno," 1976, Unpublished Essay, National Library of Wales, Misc Rec. 329, 8-12, 15-16.

<sup>9</sup> John Harries was the son of Henry Jones Harries (1739-1805) and his wife, Mary. John's father was referred to in his baptismal entry as Harry John, a mason of C.C. (Cwrt y Cadno or Cwm Cothi). John Harries inherited the family estate when his father died in 1805, aged 66. Henry Jones Harries was interested in astrology and medicine, but was never accorded with the title *dyn hysbys*. See MS.11, National Library of Wales, 119B; MS. 14, National Library of Wales, 876B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 2; Owen Davies, "Cunning Folk," 95.

<sup>10</sup> The date is calculated from the date of death on his gravestone.

<sup>11</sup> Harries was educated until he was ten years of age at The Cowings, Commercial Private Academy, Caeo, and then boarded at Haverfordwest Grammar School until he was eighteen. Arthur Mee has noted that a family tradition suggests that the profits and possible sale of Tanyresgryn Farm in the parish of Llanyrcwys may have been spent on his education. See MS. 11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> The ownership of *Synopsis Medicinae* (1685) by John Harries in 1801 may suggest an early interest in medicine. See MS.11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Although Owen Davies has suggested that it is probable that Harries had only "a working knowledge of medicine and medical practice," Ithiel Vaughan-Poppy has stated that he attended Oxford University. There are, however, no records of John as an alumnus at Oxford, but the chief librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons presented Mrs. Vaughan Poppy with details of John and Henry Harries educational pursuits and their respective qualifications. John was M.R.C.S. and M.D. while Henry was M.R.C.S., L.S.A. and M.B. See R.C. Allen, "Harries family of Cwrt y Cadno, Carmarthenshire (1785-1849)," *New Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Owen Davies, "Cunning Folk," 95; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 12-13; MS.11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 4; The National Library of Wales holds a Photograph on glass of Dr. John Harries of Pantcoy taken by M.D. Bourne of New York. c.1838, PB 8294, National Library of Wales.

<sup>15</sup> MS. 11, National Library of Wales, 119B; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 3; Ithiel Vaughan-Poppy notes that a tradition in her family suggested that Dr. Harries's favourite attire was "a full length heavy velvet cape, which he had lined with red Welsh flannel, as he felt the cold. The cape was fastened on the left shoulder with a three inch solid silver buckle with the family Coat-of-Arms design incorporated above the buckle part. This he had made with a London Silversmiths." See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 4. Compare this with the image provided for John Wrightson from Stokesley, Teeside, who in 1840 was described as wearing "a

Lewis, a lawyer's daughter from Fishguard. However, a marriage licence for 8 August 1821 notes that John Harries, surgeon, and, significantly, a bachelor of Caeo Parish, was married to Lettice Rees.<sup>16</sup>

After his studies, Harries allegedly established a practice at Harley Street, London, with his astrologer friend, Robert Cross Smith (alias 'Raphael' 1795-1832), before returning to Cwrt y Cadno.<sup>17</sup> The Welsh surgery was popular as it was recorded that:

The sick and sorrowful came... from all parts of Wales, and... he was eminently successful in his cures. Lunatics were brought to him from parts of Pembrokeshire and Radnorshire, and he had a wonderful power over them. The course of treatment would include what he would term the water treatment, the herbs treatment, and the bleeding treatment. One of his chief methods was, he would take the afflicted to the brink of the river, and fire an old flint revolver; this would frighten his patient to such a degree that he would fall into the pool. He assumed the power of charming away pain, and was so successful that people believed thoroughly that he was in league with the evil one.<sup>18</sup>

Henry Harries, his son, it has been suggested, was born in 1816,<sup>19</sup> but a christening at Caeo Parish for Harry, the eldest son of John and Lettice Harries of Pantcoy, was recorded on 7 November 1821.<sup>20</sup> He was six feet tall and had shoulder length, curly black hair, and grey-blue "piercing hypnotic eyes,"<sup>21</sup> but in later life he was described as having:

a pale face, very dark hair, hanging down in ringlets over his narrow shoulders; grey eyes, and a very high, narrow forehead... His health was very delicate, owing to a weak chest.<sup>22</sup>

Henry followed his father's footsteps and was educated at The Cowings<sup>23</sup> and at the Haverfordwest Grammar School before attending London University and later the Royal

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scarlet coat, a long white waistcoat and full-starched shirt frill; crimson knee breeches and white stockings... a man of not unkindly nature, with a pungent flavour of rough humour about him, shrewd and observant." Similarly Jenkyns, a mid-nineteenth cunning-man from Tryleg in Monmouthshire, wore tails, a box hat, and had a dark, long beard, while "*bwm-baili'r cythraul*" (the Devil's bum bailiff) of Montgomeryshire wore the more elaborate attire of pigeon feathers, a multi-coloured coat and an array of talismans; See R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 88-90; William Henderson, *Notes on Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England* (1879), 218-19; J.C. Atkinson, *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish* (1891), 113-17; Beatrix Albina Wherry, "Wizardry on the Welsh Border," *Folk-Lore* 15 (1904), 76-7; Thomas Hancock, "Llanrhaiadr-yn-Mochnant," *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 6 (1873), 329-30; See also Kathryn C. Smith, "The Wise Man and His Community", 28-9.

<sup>16</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 4; Marriage entry no. 119, Reel 213, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register), National Library of Wales, 40; In the administration of John Harries's estate Lettice was recorded as the widow of John. See Administration of John Harries of Cwrtycadno, 13 May 1842, SD/1842/199, National Library of Wales.

<sup>17</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 13; For details of Robert Cross Smith, see Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, 236, 238, 239-42; R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 93.

<sup>18</sup> F. S. Price, *History of Caio* (Swansea, 1904), 54.

<sup>19</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 1.

<sup>20</sup> Christening no. 309, Reel 212, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish), National Library of Wales, 39; MS.14,876B, National Library of Wales.

<sup>21</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 5.

<sup>22</sup> F.S. Price, *History of Caio*, 56.

College of Surgeons.<sup>24</sup> Between 1839 and 1842 Henry lived with his mother at Aberdâr, a house on their land, while Pantcoy (pictured left) was being rebuilt.<sup>25</sup> On 4 November 1842 he married Hannah Marsden, the daughter of a local workman, at Cao Church,<sup>26</sup> and among the family papers at the National Library of Wales is their 'bidding letter':

Pantcoy, Carmarthenshire  
March 6th, 1843

Having lately entered the matrimonial state we are encouraged by our friends to make a Bidding, on Thursday and Friday, the 23rd and 24th days of March instant, at our house, called Aberdare, in the Parish of Caio; when, and where the favour of your good and agreeable company is humbly solicited. Whatever donation you may be pleased to bestow on us then, will be thankfully received, warmly acknowledged, and most cheerfully repaid whenever called upon a similar occasion.

By Your Most Obedient and Humble Servants,  
Henry Harries  
Hannah Harries<sup>27</sup>

The marriage was viewed with horror by his family as it was felt that Henry had married beneath him, and allegedly the union turned out to be an unhappy one. Harries nevertheless accepted his fate and stated, "I cannot help it. I must marry her. I dare not cross my planet."<sup>28</sup>

The Harrieses used remedies that were well-known in their respective communities, particularly the use of charms, herbal treatments and "shock" therapy.<sup>29</sup> Although these methods were commonly employed, what legitimized the practices of the cunning folk in their localities was their "broader and deeper knowledge of such techniques and more experience in using them."<sup>30</sup> For example "charmners" did not set bones or concern themselves with the major organs, cancers or infectious diseases. Their major concern was with skin diseases, stopping bleeding, healing wounds or sores, and the mental well-being of

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<sup>23</sup> On 30 June 1832, John Harries presented his son with a 1777 edition of Alexander Pope's poetry while at The Cowings Academy in Cao. See J.H. Davies ('Hedd Molwynog'), "Dyn Hysbys Cwrt y Cadno," *Cymru*, 13 (1897): 217; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 13.

<sup>24</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 13; K. Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 15.

<sup>26</sup> Marriage entry no. 65, Reel 213, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register), National Library of Wales, 33; MS. 14,876B, National Library of Wales; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 15.

<sup>27</sup> Price, *History of Caio*, 56; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 15; A further bidding letter for Rees Evans of Bwlch-y-Rhyw and Anne Thomas of Esgereithry, Cao, dated 1859 is included in MS.11,117B, National Library of Wales.

<sup>28</sup> MS. 11,119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Ithiel Vaughan-Poppy also noted the ability of members of the Harries family to meditate and recorded how they held popular meditations in the summer by the Five Saints Memorial Stone at Cwrt y Cadno. The Harrieses similarly advocated 'Maypole healing' and the use of 'healing ribbons'. See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 86; See also Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkins," 36; For a clear definition of their separate roles, see Kathryn C. Smith, "The Wise Man and his Community," 28, 32-4; Owen Davies, "Charmers and Charming."

their patients. Thus treatment depended on a good working relationship between the patient and the "doctor" to "produce the necessary effect upon the mind and system of the person under treatment."<sup>31</sup> In her brief biographical sketch of the Harries family, Mrs Vaughan-Poppy noted that:

Everybody in Wales knew that both Doctors had some power which healed, they had the power of stopping blood instantly, due to healing through laying on of hands and prayer.<sup>32</sup> They believed that pure spring water was a cure on its own... They embraced every subject on healing which could possibly heal and benefit the sick... Their study and knowledge offered practical solutions to any problems, be it physical, etheric, astral, mental or spiritual. They could diagnose and treat anyone.<sup>33</sup>

One recorded case of Dr. Harries treating someone who was unbalanced concerned a man who was convinced that he was bewitched. Various doctors had prescribed drugs with little effect, and a cure was provided only when Dr. Harries had chastised the patients' family for going to "quacks." He informed the man that he had swallowed an evil spirit - a tadpole which had grown into a frog. After consulting his texts and calling on the spirits, Harries made the patient vomit. Unsurprisingly, in the vomit was the frog, and the man was cured.<sup>34</sup>

Although the Harries family were recognised as doctors, they gained notoriety with their ability to predict future events, recover lost or stolen property, fight witchcraft, and invoke benign spirits. Henry Harries issued the following proclamation describing his work as that of a *dyn hysbys*. He suggested that he could determine:

Temper, disposition, fortunate or unfortunate in their general pursuits, honour, riches, journeys and voyages (success therein, and what places best to travel in or reside in), friends and enemies, trade or profession best to follow, and whether fortunate in speculation, viz: lottery, dealing in foreign markets, etc.

Of marriage, if to marry. The description, temper, disposition of the person, rich or poor, happy or unhappy in marriage, etc.

Of children, whether fortunate or not, etc., deduced from the influence of the sun and moon, with the planetary orbs at the time of birth.

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<sup>31</sup> Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 95; See also J.H. Davies, ('Pennard'), *Rhai o Hen Ddewiniaid Cymru* (London, 1901), 154; K. Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 28-9.

<sup>32</sup> Mrs Vaughan-Poppy also observed that the *dyn hysbys* used healing ribbons and grew many plants and herbs in their garden for their medicines and ointments. See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 6, 13-14; For details of folk-medicine, see Anne E. Jones, 'Folk Medicine in Living Memory in Wales,' *Folklife. Journal of the Society for Folklife Studies*, 18 (1980): 58-68.

<sup>33</sup> Similarly Owen Davies has remarked that a cunning-person was "a multifaceted practitioner of magic, medicine, and prognostication, employing herbalism, astrology, fortune-telling and charms to seek solutions to their clients' problems." See Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, 215; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 13.

<sup>34</sup> See Davies, *Rhai o Hen Ddewiniaid Cymru*, 154-7; Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 28-9.

Also judgement and general use in sickness and disease, etc.<sup>35</sup>

There is also evidence that Henry consulted 'Raphael' in 1840 in order to be taught, via a correspondence course, how to consult the spirits. It would seem that he was unaware that Robert Cross-Smith had died eight years earlier, and that there was a new "Raphael."<sup>36</sup>

In the Pantcoy Manuscripts at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, there are various personal items which belonged to the Harries family, including an astrological almanac<sup>37</sup>, and a holograph book of incantations which showed how the "cunning man" could cause benign spirits to appear as well as listing the attributes of each spirit.<sup>38</sup> Writing in 1908, J. Ceredig Davies recalled a visit to Pantcoy three years earlier and noted the details of a powerful invocation which he had come across in the library there:

After the manner prescribed by magicians, the Exorcist must inform himself of the Rules of the Travins and Philermus; as also, what Chonactes and Pentacle, or Larim, belongs to every Genius.

After this is done, let him compose an earnest prayer unto the said Genius, which he must repeat thrice every morning for seven days before the invocation... When the day is come wherein the magician would Invoke his prayer to Genius he must enter into a private closet, having a little table and silk carpet, and two waxen candles lighted; as also a crystal stone shaped triangularly about the quantity of an apple, which stone must be fixed upon a frame in the centre of the table; and then proceeding with great devotion to Invocation, he must thrice repeat the former prayer concluding the same with Pater Noster, etc., and a Missale de Spiritu Sancto.

Then he must begin to consecrate the candles, carpet, table and crystal, sprinkling the same with his own blood, and saying : 'I do by the power of the holy names Agalon, Eloï, Eloï, Sabbathon, Anepturaton, Jah, Agian, Jah, Jehovah, Immanuel, Archon, Archonton, Sadai, Sadai, Jehovaschap, etc sanctifie and consecrate these holy utensils to the performance of this holy work, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Harries, "Nativities Calculated," MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Price, *History of Caio*, 56; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 4; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 14.

<sup>36</sup> Wonderful Magical Scrapbook, manuscript, Harry Price Collection, University of London, f.367; The letter, the identity of this new "Raphael," and the enhancement of Harries subsequent career are discussed in Davies, "Cunning Folk," 95-6; Davies, "The Decline in the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic," 321-3; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 93; Mary L. Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," *The Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society* 19 (1925):33-8; Arthur Mee also noted that from an anonymous source Henry Harries was "apprenticed" to "Raphael" for several years. See MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Miscellanea, including "The Prophetic Almanack or Annual Abstract of Celestial Love" (1825), MS. 11, 718C, National Library of Wales; Astrological almanac, MS. 11, 118C, National Library of Wales; Personal records of Cadwaladr Davies, 1733-45, MS. 3212, University of Wales Bangor; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 91, 92.

<sup>38</sup> A charm sold at Rhaeadr Gwy in 1867, MS. 11, 117B, National Library of Wales; See W.H. Howse, *Radnorshire* (Hereford, 1949), 119; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 94.

Which done, the Exorcist must say the following prayer with his face towards the East, and kneeling with his back to the consecrated table : "O thou blessed Phanael, my angel, guardian, vouchsafe to descend with thy holy influence and presence into this spotless crystal, that I may behold thy glory, etc.

This prayer being first repeated towards the East, must be afterwards said towards all the four winds thrice. And next the 70 Psalm, repeated out of a Bible that hath been consecrated in the like manner as the rest of the utensils, which ceremonies being seriously performed, the magician must arise from his knees and sit before the crystal bareheaded with the consecrated Bible in his hand and the waxen candle newly lighted waiting patiently and internally for coming and appearance of the Genius...

Now about a quarter of an hour before the Spirit come, there will appear great variety of apparitions within the glass; at first a beaten road or tract, and travellers, men, and women marching silently along.

Next there be rivers, wells, mountains, and seas appear, after that a shepherd upon a pleasant hill feeding a goodly flock of sheep, and the sun shining brightly at his going down; and lastly, innumerable flows of birds and beasts, monsters and strange appearance, and which will all vanish at the appearance of the Genius.

The Genius will be familiar in the stone at the performance of the wizard.<sup>39</sup>

In the collection there are also medical accounts and receipts for medicines<sup>40</sup>, various prescriptions, lectures and treatise on urine.<sup>41</sup> Failure to pay for these medicines would be followed by the following printed statement:

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<sup>39</sup> Extracted from Davies, "Ghost-Raising in Wales," 328-9.

<sup>40</sup> Among the Pantcoy papers at the National Library of Wales is an incomplete patients' account book which covers the period c.1813-31 and a patients' day book from 1815-29 which recorded prescriptions for individual patients. Both these items presumably belonged to Dr. John Harries and suggest that he held a surgery at Pantcoy while conducting his reputed practice in London; See Account Book, MS. 11, 702F, National Library of Wales; Patients' Day Book, 1815-1829, MS. 11, 703E, National Library of Wales.

<sup>41</sup> Prescription Book, MS. 97, National Library of Wales; Medical Lectures, MS. 11, 701C, National Library of Wales; Medical Prescriptions, MS. 11, 704A, National Library of Wales; MS. 11, 705A, National Library of Wales; Treatises on Urine, MS.11, 710B, National Library of Wales.

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Mr

To John Harries

To Medicine and Medical Attendance as per account rendered  
..... £

Sir,

Unless the above amount is paid to me on or before the ..... day of .....  
next, adverse means will be resorted for the recovery.

Your humble servant.<sup>42</sup>

Henry, on the other hand, would personally visit debtors and give away a bottle of tonic, and invariably receive full payment for his services.<sup>43</sup>

There was a well-stocked library at Pantcoy which, it has been suggested, was the finest occult library belonging to cunning folk.<sup>44</sup> The possession of a library was a common feature among such people, and ran contrary to most nineteenth century households which possessed only a bible.<sup>45</sup> Fear of such books among a semi-literate population certainly could cause local anxiety, especially as it was believed that "each cunning man was empowered by the possession of one particular volume, from which he or she had learned the essence of the craft and which had an arcane energy of its own."<sup>46</sup> This led to the notion that the Harries family derived its power from the large padlocked book of spells.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, Magic in Carmarthenshire, 3; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 16.

<sup>43</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 14.

<sup>44</sup> Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon, 91; Both Frederick Price and J.H. Davies earlier observed that the library consisted of a numerous array of "well-thumbed" books in Greek, Latin, and French. See Price, History of Caio, 56; Davies, "Dyn Hysbys Cwrt y Cadno," 217; Anon., "The Cwrtcadno Library," Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society, 23 (1932): 46 which notes that there was a copy of Ebenezer Sibly, A Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology, or the Art of Foretelling Future Events, (London, 1788); For further details of the books found at Pantcoy, see MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, Magic in Carmarthenshire, 15, 22-23; Owen Davies, "The Decline in the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic", 189.

<sup>45</sup> For additional examples, notably Edward Savage, another late eighteenth century Welsh wizard, see Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon, 90; Edward Hamer, "A Parochial Account of Llangurig," Montgomeryshire Collections, 3 (1870): 267.

<sup>46</sup> Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon, 91; See also Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkin," 31-2, 35; Owen Davies, "Cunning Folk," 93.

<sup>47</sup> Ithiel Vaughan-Poppy nevertheless makes reference to the book as being housed at the National Library of Wales. See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 2, 12; See also M.L. Lewes, Stranger Than Fiction: Being Tales From the By-ways of Ghosts and Folk-lore (London, 1911), 196; Glyn Penrhyn Jones also notes a reference to the Harries great book in Y Genhinen in 1896 whereby the *dyn hysbys* placed it on a table in the centre of the room with "great circumspection and with the dignity appropriate to his status. This substantial volume is bound in iron and has locks of iron on it. On the presentation of this to me, the Magician avowed that (1) its contents are sacred, and that (2) it has been the property of the family for generations. No medical

The book itself has failed to materialize, in spite of a search at the National Library of Wales. Moreover, in 1901, J.H. Davies commented that the book was nothing more than a large case for surgical instruments.<sup>48</sup>

Tales of supernatural events involving both John and Henry Harries have long found their way into Welsh folklore, and are quite numerous and varied. One of the most famous incidents involving John Harries concerned the disappearance of a local girl and the recovery of her body at the precise location where Harries had informed the police that they would find the corpse.<sup>49</sup> She had been murdered by her boyfriend, but the discovery led to Harries being charged as an accessory to the crime and the penning of a popular verse given here in the original Welsh text and as an English translation:

*Awn yn alarus  
At Doctor Harries  
Am ei fod yn hysbys,  
I 'mofyn hanes hon;  
Dywedai ei bod yn gorwedd  
Gerllaw Maes yr On;  
Mae ceu-bren mawr o wenwyn  
Yn tyfu bwys y lle,  
A nant yn rhedeg heibio  
Lle'i lladdwyd ganddo fe.*

We go concerned  
To Doctor Harries  
Because he is a cunning man  
To ask about her fate;  
He said that she was lying  
Near Maes yr On;  
There is a tree full of poison  
Growing by the place,  
And a stream runs near  
Where she was murdered by him.<sup>50</sup>

The details of the case were passed on to Llwyd, Glansefin, and Gwyn, Glanbran, two magistrates at Llandovery, who duly summoned Harries before them.<sup>51</sup> Harries was

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advice would be offered until the appropriate section of the great book had been consulted and the client having given his firm promise not to divulge the information to anyone." See G. Penrhyn Jones, "Folk Medicine in the Eighteenth Century," *Folklife* 7 (1969), 64.

<sup>48</sup> Davies, *Rhai O Hen Ddewiniaid Cymru*, 156; Arthur Mee was equally convinced that this book was fictitious. See MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; A. Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Possibly Maes yr Onnen (near Llandeilo).

<sup>50</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 5; Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," 34-5; Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> For details of court cases involving "cunning men," see *The Cambrian*, 7 November 1807, 3; *Western Mail*, 3-5 November 1904; *Morning Leader*, 7 November 1904; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 17; For comparative purposes, see also O. Davies, *A People Bewitched. Witchcraft and Magic in Nineteenth-Century Somerset* (Towbridge: privately published, 1999).

prepared to demonstrate his talent for second sight as part of his defence by suggesting to the magistrates, "*Dywedwch chwi yr awr y daethoch chwi i'r byd, mi ddywedaf finnau yr awr yr ewch chwi allan ohono.*"<sup>52</sup> ("You tell me which hour you came into the world, and I will tell you the hour you will depart from it.") The two magistrates, not wishing to pursue this line of questioning, and possibly unwilling to know their fate, proceeded to set Harries free.<sup>53</sup> For other cunning-men, their luck was not so good. William Jenkin of Cadoxton-juxta-Barry in Glamorgan was brought several times before the Llandaff Consistory Court during the late eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup> In November 1807, "Dr" William Jones, aged at least 70 of Swansea, was brought before the Glamorgan Assizes and committed to Cardiff gaol for witchcraft and conjuration. The *Cambrian* recorded that he was an "antiquated impostor" and "notorious offender" who had "so long imposed upon the credulity of the ignorant and unwary."<sup>55</sup>

One of the many reasons why Welsh people consulted the Harries family was their ability to locate items which had gone missing. Several journeys often met with spectacular results. For example, a farmer who lived in the southern part of Carmarthenshire had the misfortune to lose three cows, and, after a fruitless search, he decided on the long and arduous trek to Pantcoy to consult the wizard on the possible whereabouts of his cattle. Dr. Harries offered to give the farmer the information he sought the next day in order for him to have time to consult the spirits. Yet, unknown to the Doctor, the farmer, weary from his journey, sought shelter in a local barn not far from the wizard's house, and bedded down for the night in some straw. Early the next morning, the farmer was awakened by Harries, lantern in hand, drawing a circle on the floor while chanting an incantation. The fear of detection and a prevailing sense of curiosity made him stay silently hidden from view.

Standing in the middle of the drawn circle the wizard continued his chanting, summoning the appearance of several demons or "familiar spirits" who soon appeared. The opening questions of the wizard met with little response apart from one spirit who remarked "a pig in the straw." This referred to the unknown onlooker hidden in the straw. Harries, however, took no notice of this strange remark and pursued his line of questioning regarding the missing cows until the final spirit answered him positively: "The farmer's cows will be on Carmarthen bridge, at twelve o'clock tomorrow." At the end of his consultation, Harries returned home, while the farmer, who had overheard the conversation, decided to return home immediately to retrieve his cows. As predicted the cows were recovered, but to his dismay, after driving the cows only half a mile, the animals refused to move any further. Realizing that the only action he could take was to return to Pantcoy, he determined to make the journey once more. On his arrival, Harries greeted him sternly, "Serve thee right... I

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<sup>52</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 5-6; Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Similar tales are told in M.L. Lewes, *Stranger Than Fiction*, 197-8; Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," 37.

<sup>54</sup> Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkin," 48-50; For further details of the prosecution of cunning-folk post the 1736 Witchcraft Act, see Owen Davies, "Decline in the Popular Belief," 42-219; Davies, "Cunning Folk," 104-5; See also Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 17; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 107-9, both of whom claim that Harries never "worried about the law, let alone collided with it."

<sup>55</sup> *The Cambrian*, 7 November 1807, 3; Compare with the actions taken in 1863 against an unspecified cunning man from Essex who was attacked by a drunken mob after he was accused of cursing a local woman, and drowned when they "swam" him in the river. See Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 87-8; Gordon Ridgewell, "Swimming a Witch, 1863," *Folklore Society News* 25 (1997): 151-6; For further comments, see Brian C. Luxton, "William Jenkin," 33, 44-6.

have cast a spell on thy cattle for running away secretly last night from the barn without paying me for the information obtained from the spirits." The episode did, however, end on a happy note. The farmer, after paying the wizard his due, was rewarded with the sight of his animals returned to their former health, and he was able to drive them back to his farm.<sup>56</sup>

Tragic consequences were the result of the loss of a wedding ring. Upon searching for some time, a married woman decided to seek advice at Pantcoy. After walking the fifteen miles, she was surprised to be met by Dr. Harries who informed her why she had come to Pantcoy. He also told her that she would receive her ring from one of her relatives during the course of the next few days. Pleased with the information, she returned home, and the ring was duly returned by her own son who expressed his sorrow as well as his relief that he could now die in peace. Tragically he died two days afterwards!<sup>57</sup>

The cunning man also possessed the ability to know the movements of his enemies, and could inflict incalculable harm upon them.<sup>58</sup> Thus John and Henry Harries were very influential in the everyday life of rural Welsh communities, and people were fearful of the punishments which could be meted out to those who committed malicious acts. Cunning folk could immobilize people with a look, make them see items appear or dance before their eyes<sup>59</sup>, or force them to act irrationally.<sup>60</sup> Two examples provided by Marie Trevelyan demonstrate the alleged ability of the *dyn hysbys* to punish cheats or those of a mean disposition. During a visit to Carmarthen with his friends, Dr. Harries was denied some ripe fruit by a "man of considerable means" while they were entertained in his garden. After persuading the host to venture up a ladder to show the guests that the fruit was unfit for consumption, Harries ensured that the man could not move up or down the ladder. After having been taught a lesson in good manners, Dr. Harries released the gentleman from his predicament.<sup>61</sup> On another occasion when he was overcharged for some meat at Swansea, Harries placed a "spell" upon the butcher who was forced to dance and sing "eight and six for meat! What a wicked cheat!" His wife, servants and children also succumbed, and continued to do so until Dr. Harries removed the spell, warning the butcher "that will teach you not to overcharge honest people again."<sup>62</sup>

The ability to "mark" those who acted maliciously or people who had stolen property was commented upon by contemporary observers. One well-known example was the marking of an old man from Tregaron with a horn on his head. To conceal this horn the old man wore a handkerchief. The townsfolk strongly believed this to be the work of John Harries. The "marking" stemmed from a quarrel between two unnamed local farmers. The first farmer had allegedly cast a spell on the other farmer's daughter which made her extremely ill. Although the local doctors persevered, they could not find a remedy. The sick girl's father, therefore, sought the help of Dr. Harries who named the culprit and offered to

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<sup>56</sup> Davies, "Ghost-Raising in Wales," 329-31; MS.11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 15-16; Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," 35-6.

<sup>57</sup> MS.11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 15-16; Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," 35-6.

<sup>58</sup> See Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> For an example, see Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 30.

<sup>60</sup> See Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 95.

<sup>61</sup> Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales*, 216-17; Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales*, 217-18.

"mark" him with the provision that the culprit's name would not be disclosed. Shortly after the visit to Pantcoy, the two farmers met, and the culprit was exposed as the cause of the girl's illness and subsequent death. From that point onwards the horn receded. However, Dr. Harries' spell continued and fell upon the farmer's son who, it was suggested, caused the original mischief. The son, on returning from work in Glamorgan, contracted a severe illness and never again left his bed.<sup>63</sup>

Even fifty years after his death in 1839, John Harries was remembered for his ability to retrieve lost items and "mark" those who had received ill-gotten gains. Writing in the Red Dragon in 1886, Helen Watney recalled her life as a young girl at Llanelli and her experiences of Dr. Harries. She noted that when her mother had several spoons stolen and suspected one of her servants; she announced that she would consult the *dyn hysbys*. It is evident that the thought of being "marked" by Harries was sufficient as the items were returned. Watney also recalled the example of a farmer whose horse had been stolen. Again there was recourse to Harries who announced that the farmer would "know the thief who had stolen the animal by a big mark on his forehead, like a horn." It turned out to be one of his nephews who had developed a large cyst in the center of his head.<sup>64</sup>

Arthur Mee similarly recounted several tales where goods had been stolen, but the offer to "mark" the offender was refused. On one occasion the victim, after having declined to have the culprit "marked," asked to see the thief. Dr. Harries obliged and an image of the thief was shown in a looking-glass.<sup>65</sup> This was a common instrument used by practitioners to indicate goods or culprits, but, as Ronald Hutton comments, this practice gave credit to the practitioner because "the reflecting object was held to be empowered by magic, but it effectively threw more of the onus of achieving a result onto the client."<sup>66</sup> Mee also recorded the story of an old drover from Five Roads who had lost the £80 which he had received for selling his cattle. Dr. Harries promised the man that he would quickly get his money back and that the thief would be punished by being bedridden. The drover was delighted to hear such news, but was later dismayed to find that his wife, who had confessed to the crime, had taken to her bed. Here she remained for the next eighteen years.<sup>67</sup>

How can these events be interpreted? It is possible that, as John and Henry Harries became widely known, more people would visit the remote hamlet. These individuals, as well as the local community, would thus seek medical cures, horoscopes and "magical" spells, and at the same time avail Pantcoy (pictured left) of the local news and more significantly local gossip. Such information could then easily be assimilated by the doctors

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<sup>63</sup> Anon., "Three Carmarthenshire Conjurors," Bye-Gones Relating to Wales and the Border Counties, vol. 5 (2nd Series, 1897), 209; Another examples is provided in Glanffrwd Thomas, "The Witches of the Southern Counties of Wales," 117.

<sup>64</sup> H. Watney, "A Welsh Archimago," Red Dragon, 10 (1886): 282-3; MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, Magic in Carmarthenshire, 9.

<sup>65</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, Magic in Carmarthenshire, 10; Marie Trevelyan, Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales, 215-16.

<sup>66</sup> Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon, 96.

<sup>67</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Compare to the example of the farmer from Neath whose neighbor was marked for stealing £100 and was bedridden for eighteen months. See Marie Trevelyan, Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales, 216.

and put to good use in the retrieval of lost items or to single out the culprit.<sup>68</sup> It is not too great a stretch of the imagination to accept that the men were abreast of such gossip and could have made simple deductions.<sup>69</sup> Owen Davies advances this argument and acknowledges that the ability of the cunning-man to diagnose immediately a visitor's problem or the reason for the visit enhanced their credibility. This, he suggests, "invoked a sense of confidence in the cunning-person, and by providing such an impressive display of magical powers, enabled the cunning-person to accordingly set a higher value on their subsequent dealings."<sup>70</sup> The Harries family, like other Welsh cunning-folk, also had their own unlicensed public house and, therefore, their own supply of local news.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore when the tales are recounted, especially when they involved illness or death, important facts tended to be omitted: Was the victim previously ill or vulnerable to disease? To what extent was the disease contracted prevalent in the locality? Had the intercession of the cunning man caused a seizure or stroke brought on by stress or guilt? How did the victim die - by accident or by a short or a prolonged illness?

It could be argued that marking or simply the threat of doing so was meant to provoke fear, and this measure in rural Welsh communities certainly had a significant degree of success. John and Henry Harries, aware of local gossip, may well have played upon people's superstitious and vulnerable natures. It is also possible that the two men may have hypnotized their victims, and induced in them the irrational belief that they were marked in such a way that was visible for all to see. As such, both men manipulated their victims, pricked their consciences, and made them believe that they were susceptible to retribution.

When these tales and possible explanations are borne in mind, there were occasions when the 'cunning men' of Cwrt y Cadno failed to retrieve lost items or offered misleading reports. In the early 1830s, The Cambrian newspaper reported that a man from the Merthyr area who had lost some valuable goods consulted Dr. John Harries, but he left Pantcoy no wiser than he had been previously.<sup>72</sup> Similarly Harries's report of the death of a man in a winch was proved incorrect. On separate occasions, upon the instructions of Harries, two winches were searched, but no body was found. This was not surprising as the man turned out to be still alive.<sup>73</sup>

Some contemporaries were also quite scathing in their comments on the work of Dr. Henry Harries. Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace, a well-known naturalist, observed that the *dyn hysbys* when consulted, pretended to know who his guests were and why they were there. Wallace commented further that:

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<sup>68</sup> See Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 97.

<sup>69</sup> Brian Luxton emphasizes the importance of gossip and rumor, and acknowledges that the "written word was only understood by a small proportion of society and hence tradition, experience and knowledge were carried by the spoken word." See Luxton, "William Jenkin," 51.

<sup>70</sup> Davies "Cunning Folk," 99.

<sup>71</sup> Davies, "Cunning Folk," 100; *Carmarthen Journal*, 23 April 1886; See also the reference to Ysgubor Hanner, an unlicensed public house near Pantcoy, whereby "the doctor and his friends must have spent a good deal of time as he was fond of his cup and so were some of his young men."; See MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> For details, see Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Anon., ('Brutus?'), "Cwrt y Cadno," 286; See also comments by Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 97.

He is, however, generally not at home, and his wife treats them well and holds them in conversation till he returns, then he immediately gives them some particulars of the neighbourhood they live in, and pretends to describe the person who stole the goods and the house he lives in, etc., and endeavours to frighten the thief by giving out that he will mark him so that everybody shall know him. In some cases this succeeds, the person, fearful of the great conjurer's power, returns the goods and the conjurer then gets the credit. In other cases he manages to tell them something which they cannot tell how he became aware of, and then even if nothing more is heard of the goods, he still keeps up his fame.<sup>74</sup>

Between 1839-40, David Owen ("Brutus") and other writers were equally scathing in *Yr Haul* and other Welsh publications. Owen attacked Henry Harries's abilities, and rebuffed suggestions that there was a great book of spells.<sup>75</sup> John Rowland noted, after a visit to Pantcoy in 1843, that he and a guest were entertained in a kitchen by the housemaid or the doctor's wife. While they ate oatmeal cake and drank some ale, the hostess asked questions pertaining to the health of Rowland's unspecified companion. Rowland observed that the doctor's study was close at hand and every word could have been overheard should anybody have been listening from the study.<sup>76</sup> After finishing their refreshments they were ushered into an adjoining room where Henry Harries consulted several books in order to "read" the guest's "planet." The symptoms of the illness and its causes, which Rowland suggests were already known, were then diagnosed and a cure offered.<sup>77</sup>

Yet why should Harries lie or risk his reputation by such underhand methods? He was a respectable doctor and landowner, and the income generated from the estate presumably would have sustained him and his family. Furthermore, in another account of the treatment of visitors at Pantcoy, Henry Harries was recorded as "one of the most kindhearted fellows that ever lived... He was a good Latin and English scholar, and a clever herbalist."<sup>78</sup>

John Harries died on 11 May 1839 aged fifty-four in a fire which also damaged the family home at Pantcoy, and on 13 May he was buried at Caeo churchyard in his father's grave.<sup>79</sup> The tombstone reads:

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<sup>74</sup> A.R. Wallace, *My Life*, I (London, 1905) 219; as cited in MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, pp.7-8.

<sup>75</sup> Brutus also challenged Harries to "do your worst. I am ready for you," but the challenge was not taken up. See Mee (ed.) *Carmarthenshire Notes, Antiquarian, Topographical, and Curious*, I (1889), 29; Anon., ('Llewelyn' Brycheiniog; 'Torwerth' Caio), *Yr Haul*, 4 (1839): 72-6, 142-5; See also comments in *The Welshman*, 13 July 1849; *Carmarthen Journal*, 23 April 1886 (comments from John Rowland).

<sup>76</sup> See similar comments in Davies, "Cunning Folk," 99; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 97.

<sup>77</sup> J. Rowland, "Dr. Harries Court y Cadno. The Carmarthenshire Conjuror," in A. Mee (ed.), *Carmarthenshire Notes*, I, 29; MS.11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Anon., "Harries, Court-y-Cadno," *Carmarthenshire Notes*, II (1890): 61; MS.11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 13

<sup>79</sup> The administration of his estate was completed by 1842. See SD/1842/199, National Library of Wales.

IN  
MEMORY OF  
HENRY JONES, PANTCOY  
WHO DIED AUGUST 6, 1805  
AGED 66 YEARS  
ALSO OF HIS SON  
JOHN HARRIES, PANTCOY  
SURGEON WHO DIED MAY 11  
1839 AGED 54 YEARS.<sup>80</sup>

The character of his death and funeral was, however, unusual. He had a premonition that he would die by accident on 11 May, and to avoid this happening he stayed in bed throughout the day.<sup>81</sup> During the night, he was awoken by people crying out that the house was on fire. In his haste to douse the flames, he slipped from the ladder he was standing on and was killed.<sup>82</sup> Even after his death, the spirits played a part in the funeral of the *dyn hysbys*. It was alleged that while the body was being carried to the churchyard, the coffin suddenly became far lighter, and it was widely believed that the evil spirits who had possessed his soul at the time of his death had now taken possession of his body.<sup>83</sup> J.H. Davies ("Hedd Molwynog") commented on the local suggestions that spirits had secured his body by noting that they "buried him in an isolated spot on the mountainside," and he went on to note that while the coffin became lighter "a herd of cows were frightened in a field nearby, and they were not rounded up until they reached Pwll Uffern ('Hell's Pool') waterfall about four miles away."<sup>84</sup>

Henry Harries had a less sensational death, if not a less tragic end. He died from consumption on 16 June 1849, aged twenty-eight, and was buried three days later.<sup>85</sup> Other family members also had some ability in predicting the future as "there was also a daughter who was rather clever in the "art" while John Harries "dabbled in it but never shone."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Monumental inscription in Cao Churchyard; See also Burial entry no. 584, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 212, 73, National Library of Wales; MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; MS. 14, 876B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 3; Dr. Harries was buried near the east window.

<sup>81</sup> Probably deduced from his own horoscope. This has not been located.

<sup>82</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 6; Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 17.

<sup>83</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 16-17; Price, *History of Caio*, 55-6; Bosse-Griffiths, *Byd y Dyn Hysbys*, 33; E.Gruffydd, *Gwrachod Cymru* (Caernarfon, 1980), 94; Ceredig Davies observed that this occurrence was not an uncommon event as a similar case was recorded concerning a conjuror who was buried in 1873 at Llanafan churchyard in Cardiganshire. See Davies, "Ghost-Raising in Wales," 331.

<sup>84</sup> Davies ('Hedd Molwynog'), " *Dyn Hysbys Cwrt y Cadno*," 215; Gruffydd, *Gwrachod Cymru*, 94; Davies nevertheless found it strange that the spirits should take the body but leave the headstone at the church intact. It is worth noting that Harries, like many cunning-folk, retained their Christian beliefs and used Christian terminology in their healing spells. Arthur Mee tends to confirm this as he points out that John Harries had his children christened and read devotional literature. One of these texts was inscribed with the verse: "John Harries, Surgeon, Pantcoy, Caio. His hand and pen, God give him health to-night again." See MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 21; Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 101-2.

<sup>85</sup> Burial no. 720, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 212, 90, National Library of Wales; MS. 14, 876B, National Library of Wales; It is also suggested that he may have been buried at Cao churchyard or in the Baptist chapel at Pumsaint. See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 15, 19.

<sup>86</sup> MS.11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 22; It is also suggested that a servant at Pantcoy had "inherited" the gift, see Rhys "A Welsh Archimago," 373; The idea that witchcraft was

These are probably references to Ann (1824-?)<sup>87</sup> and John (1828-1863)<sup>88</sup>, the daughter and son of John Harries.<sup>89</sup> The following letter from J. Williams of The Court, Brecon, on 21 March 1863 addressed to John Harries, shows the continuing role of Harries family in Welsh social life:

I have written to ask if you would oblige me by ruling my planet. I have long had a wish to have it done and when I heard of your truly wonderful gift I determined to write. I wish to know something relating to my marriage and particular friends.<sup>90</sup>

This was not an isolated case as the fame of Cwrt y Cadno had spread quickly throughout Wales and led to number of distinguished visitors, including the actress, Sarah Siddons and her colleagues in 1851, while in 1854 the writer George Borrow spent a day at Pantcoy.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in November 1904, a court case concerning a disputed will was recorded in the *Western Mail*. The case revolved around the mental stability of the testator, Morgan Jones of Llanguicke, who, it was argued, "suffered from delusions, and believed himself bewitched."<sup>92</sup> He had prior to his death refused food and stated that he was bewitched by tailors and by John Harries of Cwrt y Cadno. The reporter also noted that Mr. Jones would:

not go to bed until the early morning, and he would smash the windows, basins, and earthen ware. He threw the crocks after the witness... He cut the boots belonging to witness and others in the house, and said he wanted them

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inherited is explored in Luxton, "William Jenkin," 41-2; Davies, "Cunning Folk," 95; Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 102-4; There is also a suggestion that Dr. John Harries had "pupils" who were trained in the "art" whereby Dr. Harries would go to an isolated place in the woods and in a glade he would mark out a circle on the ground and place a wooden pole about three foot high in the center. Upon this he would place his great book with seven great locks and would start chanting out aloud from the book, calling to the spirits. See Lewes, "The Wizards of Cwrt-y-Cadno," 34; Gruffydd, *Gwrachod Cymru*, 91-2; I am grateful to Dr. Glyn H. Roberts for his translation of this later study.

<sup>87</sup> It is suggested that she married a member of the John family from Carmarthenshire, but the Cynwyl Gaeo registers record that on 11 March 1842 Anne, aged 18 and the daughter of John Harries Surgeon and farmer, married Roderick Roderick, a cattle drover from Penrhiw in Caeo parish. See Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 15; Christening no. 388, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 212, p.49, National Library of Wales; Marriage entry no. 57, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 213, p.29, National Library of Wales.

<sup>88</sup> Christening no. 495, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 212, p.62, National Library of Wales; Burial entry no. 143, CPD (Cynwyl Gaeo parish register). Reel 212, p.18, National Library of Wales.

<sup>89</sup> Conwyl Caeo, Pantcoy, Census Returns c. 1841, District 4, HO. 1071381, Public Records Office; MS. 14, 876B, National Library of Wales; John Harries II's children continued to live at Pantcoy after his death while Henry Harries sons left the area. One when to live at Petersfield in Herefordshire while the other emigrated to America. See MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, *Magic in Carmarthenshire*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> MS. 11, 717B, National Library of Wales; An earlier letter dated 5 January 1860 from William Lloyd of Cillia farm, Breconshire, required John Harries to offer some medical help and also provide a horoscope. Lloyd wrote "My sisters desire you to do the best you can for them. Mary Ann have a pain in the breast, will you please send a receipt for it as well as the paltry. Mary Ann Lloyd was born May 20th or 24th it was on a Sunday at four o'clock in the morning in the year 1823, lives at Cilbedog, Crickadain, Breconshire. Catherine Lloyd was born August 23 at 20 minutes past eleven in the four noon 1830. Lives at Dentwyn, Cwmdu, Breconshire." MS.11, 716C, National Library of Wales.

<sup>91</sup> Vaughan-Poppy, "The Harries Kingdom," 16.

<sup>92</sup> *Western Mail*, 3-5 November 1904; See also *Morning Leader*, 7 November 1904.

all to be killed. He said he cut the boots that their feet might be wetted and that they might die...<sup>93</sup>

Finally, it is perhaps pertinent to conclude with the words of Arthur Mee whose studies of folklore in the early twentieth century have added to our knowledge of Welsh rural life and folk customs. He wrote:

Some of the wonders... have a solid basis and are not to be explained away on the basis of quackery or fraud. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that whilst we today are privileged to know a great deal, our forefathers were not all ignorant... John and Henry Harries were clever surgeons and skilful astrologers; they may or may not have dabbled in magic; but they were remarkable men in advance of their time...<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Western Mail, 3-5 November 1904; See also Morning Leader, 7 November 1904.

<sup>94</sup> MS. 11, 119B, National Library of Wales; Mee, Magic in Carmarthenshire, 1-2, 23.