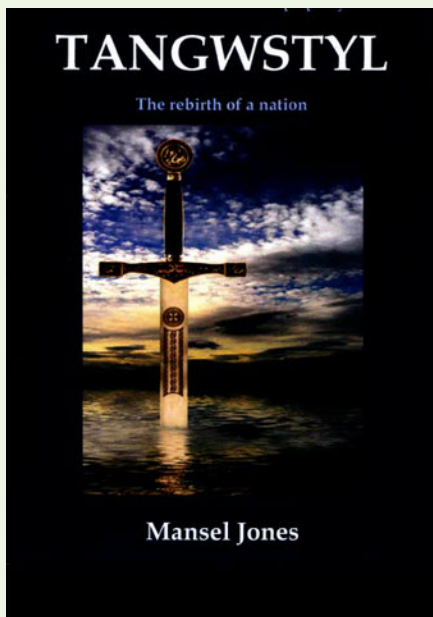


## Tangwstl - A Revue of a New Novel By Mansel Jones



Local author, Mansel Jones has recently published a novel with the title "Tangwstl" set in this locality at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This century must have been a terrible time to be alive in Western Europe. The middle of the century saw the coming of the Black Death - the bubonic plague. This was spread by fleas living on rats. It almost always resulted in

death within a day or so of contracting it. It was also the time of what became known as the Hundred Years War, when almost without a break there was war between England and France bringing death and devastation wherever fighting broke-out.

As well as this, it was a time when men and women feared for their mortal souls. There were two popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon and people suffered great torment over which was the "true" Pope and to which should they be obedient if they were to enter the heavenly kingdom. It was the time too when heretical ideas started to appear in the church and lay people started to question the power which a venal church had over ordinary people. The papacy resorted to desperate measures in order to maintain their power

The Black Death had triggered a social revolution because it had created a shortage of labour and to some extent peasants were able to dictate their terms. Men, who had been the virtual slaves of the local lord, now found themselves small tenant farmers. They now found that they could often command a wage for their labour and they started to question the authority of their lord and their priest.

It is against this background that the novel has been set. In time, it is largely limited to a period of 8 days in May 1399 and in terms of space the action all takes place in the locality of Kenfig. Yet within these restrictions, the author has managed to write a riveting story of love and hate and of good and evil, cowardice and bravery, peopled by real individuals.

There is Euros the lord of The Hall in North Cornelly, prepared to make a stand against the arbitrary Anglo-

Norman rule, and Meirian the feisty widow of John Lovell living at Ty Maen, South Cornelly who is in dispute with Rhys Coch over the ownership of Cornelly quarries. Rhys himself has been declared an outlaw and is in hiding.

Then there's the de la March family the custodians of Kenfig Castle and the arch villains of the story. There are three brothers and the eldest Roger is the constable of the castle. They are quarrelsome and ambitious and will stop at nothing to achieve their ends. As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that they are involved in a plot to murder the king. The king of course is the unpopular Richard II and the planned assassination is part of the plan to replace him with his cousin Henry Bolingbroke. Richard is on his way to fight in Ireland, and is due to spend a night at Kenfig

There are problems at Margam Abbey, where some heretical monks are actually translating and circulating part of the Bible into English, making the Holy Word accessible for all to read. This threatens the authority of the Church and Cardinal Francesco D'Orso arrives from Rome to hunt out and punish those responsible.

Who is Tirion who arrives one night at the Hall and gives birth to a girl child whom she names Tangwstl? Who is the mysterious wounded knight who is cared for by Euros? The story moves along at a terrific pace. The dialogue is sharp, taut and authentic. The villains are unfailingly evil and you really care about what is going to happen to the ordinary people caught up in this web of intrigue. It holds your interest from start to end and is a real "page" turner

The fact that it all takes place in and around Kenfig makes it all the more exciting and interesting. Even though it's Kenfig as it might be 600 years ago, you can indeed walk in the footsteps of Euros as he goes from Ballas to Stormy or from The Hall along Water Street to the Abbey.

This is all-in-all a very good read and an excellently written book, giving us a vivid insight of what it must have been like to live in Kenfig all that long time ago

**The book is on sale at various local outlets including the Kenfig Society at £10,00 and for each book we sell the Society receives £3.00. Copies will be on sale at Society meetings or can be obtained from Conall Boyle - 01656 741487 or Terry Robbins - 01656 782351**

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