Heraldry became established relatively late in Wales, but as its use spread, in the fourteenth and especially in the fifteenth century, it was eagerly embraced by the poets as a new means of praising their patrons' noble status and ancient lineage. Coats of arms were attributed retrospectively to revered ancestors who had lived long before the development of heraldry and, likewise, to other figures of importance in the bardic tradition. The coat of arms of King Arthur, for example, is mentioned in one of Guto'r Glyn's poems:

> Wrth roi sawd, Arthur yw Siôn
> I dir Caer a'i dair coron;
> when attacking, John is Arthur
> for the land of Caerleon and his three crowns;

*(poem 75.17-18)*

Much of what we know about Welsh heraldry derives from the works of the poets, not only from their poetry but also from other descriptions, and illustrations, of coats of arms. The fifteenth-century poet Lewys Glyn Cothi, for example, often drew or painted coats of arms at the head of his poems, particularly in the Peniarth 109 manuscript.[1] The earliest heraldic treatise in Welsh is known as 'Llyfr Dysgread Arfau' or 'Llyfr Arfau' and, according to one of its later copyists, was translated from French or Latin by one Sîôn Trefor, who may have been Sîôn Trefor of Bryncunallt, one of Guto'r Glyn's patrons (who died in 1493), or Sîôn Trefor II, bishop of St Asaph (d. 1410), who was a member of the same family.[2] The earliest surviving copy of the 'Llyfr Arfau' is in Jesus College, Oxford manuscript 141, written by the poet Gutun Owain between 1471 and c.1500,[3] and there was also, at one time, a copy by Lewys Glyn Cothi in the White Book of Hergest. The treatise describes the virtues and qualities associated with various colours and 'charges' that might be used on a coat of arms.

'Charges' could be creatures such as a lion, symbolizing courage, ferocity, strength, nobility and generosity, or other symbols such as the cross, of which twelve different varieties are described in the 'Llyfr Arfau'.[4] Coats of arms were inherited within families, but whilst his father was alive it was the custom for an eldest son's arms to bear a small additional charge 'as a difference'. Another common practice was to display the arms of both parents on a son's shield, whilst illegitimacy might be indicated by a 'bend sinister'. As well as explaining all this, the 'Llyfr Arfau' also refers to the power of the 'king herald' (*brenin herod*) or 'king of arms' to confer the right to bear a particular coat of arms.

Understanding the meaning of the various colours and changes was important, so it is no surprise that both 'drawing coats of arms' (*tynnu arfau*) and 'heraldry' (*herodraeth*) were included among the twenty-four feats that noblemen were expected to master. The terminology required was complex and, thanks to the 'Llyfr Arfau' and other heraldic treatises, was readily available in Welsh in the later medieval and early modern period, though simpler, descriptive language was often used instead.[5]

Guto'r Glyn does not seem to have had such a strong interest in heraldry as his contemporaries Gutun Owain and Lewys Glyn Cothi, but he was certainly aware of its importance. In two poems addressed to Henry Griffith of Newcourt he describes himself as Henry's herod 'herald' *(poem 32.15* and 35.23), perhaps intending this as a metaphor for a poet's role in praising his patron's status, lineage, virtues and deeds.
There are also some more specific heraldic references in Guto's poems. In his elegy for Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd of Corsygedol he mentions a llew du 'black lion' which can be identified with the black lion rampant on a white or silver (argent) field that formed the coat of arms of the descendants of Owain Brogyntyn, a twelfth-century lord of Edeirnion, Powys (poem 52.42). This coat of arms is one of those described in lists of the 'Fifteen Tribes of Gwynedd' which, along with the 'Five Kingly Tribes of Wales', first appeared towards the middle of the fifteenth century. Like the twenty-four feats, these lists reflect the contemporary enthusiasm for classifying and grouping, as well as for heraldry and genealogy. [6]

Likewise, the 'ravens of Urien' (brain Urien) in Guto's praise poem for Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais can be identified with the coat of arms showing three ravens (along with a 'chevron Sable', on a field of argent) attributed to the descendants of Urien, the sixth-century king of Rheged (poem 14.34 and see also line 44). [7] This is not to say that either Urien Rhedeg or Owain Brogyntyn ever actually bore such arms themselves, but heraldry was nonetheless of great importance later on as a means of expressing the pride of Welsh gentry families in their ancient ancestry.

Because animals were very popular both as heraldic charges and as metaphors in poetry (see, for example, hunted animals and falconry), it is not always easy to tell whether a particular poetic reference to a lion, for example, was intended to have a specific heraldic meaning or a more general one in praising the patron's courage or ferocity in battle. Sometimes the poet may have had both meanings in mind, as is perhaps the case with Guto's reference to Edward ap Davyd of Bryncunallt as llew'r Waun Isaf 'lion of Lower Chirk' (poem 104.1). A manuscript in Guto's own hand, copied by Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt in the seventeenth century, attributed Edward's ancestor Tudur Trefor arms which included a lion rampant Or, [9] and this lion is seen on the arms of several branches of the Trefor family. [10] Guto may well have chosen the metaphor carefully to refer to the family's arms as well as implying that Edward was a fierce and brave lord. Similarly, the poet Ieuan Teiler described the sons of Edward's second son, Siôn Trefor, as llew[o]d Trevor 'lions of Trevor'. [10] A lion is also depicted on the manuscript of the poem in which he is addressed, llew Nannau a llin Ynyr 'lion of Nannau and Ynyr's lineage'.

Guto refers to the custom of wearing 'arms' on clothing, perhaps in the form of a badge derived from a coat of arms, in a poem in praise of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan (poem 19.39-42; see the section on badges), and coats of arms and related designs were also displayed on a range of different
The medieval heralds also devised arms for various knights and lords from history and literature. Notable examples include the toads attributed to Pharamond, the cross and martlets of Edward the Confessor, and the various arms attributed to the Nine Worthies and the Knights of the Round Table. Seals from the latter part of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries show no evidence of heraldic symbolism, but by the end of the twelfth century, seals are uniformly heraldic in nature.[18][21]. A heraldic achievement consists of a shield of arms the coat of arms, or simply coat, together with all of its accompanying elements, such as a crest, supporters, and other heraldic embellishments. Symbolic seals, crests, and coats of arms are a common concept across cultures. From the simplicity of Japanese mon to the regality of English coats of arms all the way to America's Great Seal, humans around the world create graphical representations of themselves. And who doesn't love all the sigils from Game Of Thrones!? Creating A Lesson. We could apply these ideas to a lesson in which students: develop an understanding of symbols, research college seals, discuss family crests, develop symbolic seals for themselves, create symbols for ideas across subjects. Open With Harry. The coat of arms usually includes a shield, helmet, and crest, together with any accompanying devices, such as supporters, badges, heraldic banners, and mottoes. Beginning in the twelfth century, seals assumed a distinctly
heraldic character; a number of seals dating from between 1135 and 1155 appear to show the adoption of heraldic devices in England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. A notable example of an early armorial seal is attached to a charter granted by Philip I, Count of Flanders, in 1164. From a very early date, illustrations of arms were frequently embellished with helmets placed above the shields.