

DAFYDD (DAVID) ap GRUFFYDD (died 1283), prince of Gwynedd

Name: Dafydd (David) Ap Gruffydd

Date of death: 1283

Spouse: Elisabeth Ferrers

Child: Dafydd Goch ap Dafydd

Child: Owain ap Dafydd ap Gruffydd

Child: Llywelyn ap Dafydd ap Gruffydd

Parent: Senena ferch Caradog

Parent: Gruffydd ap Llywelyn

Gender: Male

Occupation: prince of Gwynedd

Area of activity: Military; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Royalty and Society

Author: Thomas Jones Pierce

third son of **Gruffydd ap Llywelyn** and Senena, and younger brother of **Owain** and **Llywelyn ap Gruffydd**. The date of his birth is uncertain. Since he was apparently too young to participate with **Owain** and **Llywelyn** in the terms of the peace of Woodstock (1247), it can perhaps be assumed that he came of age (at 14 in Welsh law) between 1247 and 1252, for in the latter year he is found - though still to all appearances under the tutelage of his mother - with a small share of power as lord of Cymydmaen in the far west of Gwynedd. The first known references to David, however, go back to 1241 when he and a younger brother, **Rhodri**, became hostages to Henry III under the terms of a royal agreement with Senena, relating to her husband and eldest son.

David's political career may be said to have begun when he was summoned to do homage to Henry III in 1253. The keynote of that career was set in 1255 when David joined **Owain** in opposition to **Llywelyn** who defeated them both at the battle of Bryn Derwin. Though released from prison the following year and re-admitted to a prominent and influential position at **Llywelyn**'s court, David on two subsequent occasions showed himself openly and bitterly hostile to **Llywelyn** : in 1263 he joined Henry III, an action repeated in relation to Edward I in 1274 after an unsuccessful attempt, in association with the princes of lower Powys, to encompass **Llywelyn**'s death. Yet, after **Llywelyn**'s triumph in 1267 when he was officially recognized as Prince of Wales by Henry III, **Llywelyn** agreed to restore to David his former influence and status in Welsh affairs; and once more, in 1277, David was re-established in Wales, though on that occasion it was by way of reward from the Crown for the part he had played in bringing about **Llywelyn**'s humiliating defeat in that year. Actually, for a promise of part of Snowdonia David secured only a renewed promise of a reversion thereof, and meanwhile he had to content himself with temporary grants of royal territory in north-east Wales, together with properties in Cheshire and elsewhere in England, brought to him as a result of his marriage - part of the general settlement with Edward - to Elizabeth Ferrers of the family of Derby and a distant kinswoman of the king.

During the next five years David's grievances against the English authorities were on a par with those of **Llywelyn** himself; and indeed it was David who forced **Llywelyn**'s hand by his attack on Hawarden on Palm Sunday, 1282, and so precipitated the final conflict. David played a prominent and not unheroic part in the war that followed; and after **Llywelyn**'s death, in December, he held out until the following June. A month before his betrayal by men of his own tongue, he was addressing letters as Prince of Wales from his mountain stronghold of Dolbadarn. Eventually he was brought to trial at Shrewsbury, and there, on 3 October 1283, David III, on account of his broken allegiance to England's king, suffered a traitor's death.

There are no records of David's marital associations before his alliance with Elizabeth Ferrers; but he had a large number of daughters who appear to have ended their days in various nunneries, and two sons, Llywelyn and Owen, the former dying a prisoner at Bristol Castle in 1288 and the latter being still incarcerated there as late as 1305.

Verdicts on David are usually unduly harsh. For David's attitude to **Llywelyn** there was some genuine legal and political justification; and though the weaknesses of his character are evident, there is much in the record of his life which reveals a man of exceptional courage and personal attractiveness.

Author

Professor Thomas Jones Pierce, (1905 - 1964)

Sources

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Calendar of Chancery Rolls - (ii) Welsh Rolls, passim

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Dafydd ap Gruffydd](#)

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