

WILIAM LLYN (1534 or 1535 - 1580), 'a poet from Llŷn',

Name: Wiliam Llyn
Date of birth: 1534 or 1535
Date of death: 1580
Child: Jane Llyn
Child: Richard Llyn
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Brinley Rees

According to contemporary references. Like *Simwnt Fychan*, *Wiliam Cynwal*, and *Siôn Tudur*, he was *Gruffudd Hiraethog*'s pupil, and his name appears as one of the four poets who graduated as chief bards at the *Caerwys eisteddfod*, 1568. It may be inferred that most of his patrons lived in Merioneth, Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire, and Caernarvonshire, but he addressed eulogies to families as widely separated as those of Caehywel, Salop; *Penmynydd*, Anglesey; *Madryn* and *Bodwrda*, Llŷn; *Golden Grove* and Abermarlais in the vale of Towy; and Aberbrân, Brecknock. He also sang the praises of a number of clergymen, among them those of *Wiliam Hughes*, bishop of St Asaph, and *Richard Davies*, bishop of S. Davids, whose palace at Abergwili he said he had visited. In his elegy on his friend Owain ap Gwilym, the poet and clergyman of Tal-y-llyn, Meirionnydd, he recalls that they journeyed together to South Wales. According to a note written in a hand that belongs to about the latter half of the 17th century, Wiliam Llŷn also was a cleric, but this can scarcely be true. In his will he leaves his house at Oswestry to his wife and expresses the desire to be buried in the churchyard there. In the church register of that parish there are records not only of the death of the poet on the last day of August 1580, but also of the christening of his son Richard in 1569, of the death of his daughter Jane in 1585, and of the death of 'Richard Llŷn, Miller ' in 1587. It may, therefore, be inferred that he lived at Oswestry, at least for the last eleven years of his life. *Rhys Cain* and *Morris Kyffin* were his pupils and it was to *Rhys* that he left his books. Both *Siôn Phylip* and *Rhys Cain* wrote elegies for him, and he is said to have died before attaining the age of 46.

More than half the poems in *J. C. Morrice*'s edition of his poetry (Phillipps 21559 in the Cardiff Free Library) were copied from manuscripts believed to have been in the poet's own handwriting. This collection comprises sixteen *awdlau*, fifty panegyric and elegiac *cywyddau*, two *cywyddau* seeking a reconciliation with patrons who were vexed with him, a flying addressed to *Owain Gwynedd* (*fl.* 1550-90) concerning the welcome given the 'fox from Lleyrn ' at Caerwynyr, some eight begging *cywyddau*, a few *cywyddau* on love, and a number of *englynion*. His *awdlau*, his *cywyddau* of praise, and his begging *cywyddau*, all show that he was one of the greatest exponents of the traditional forms of poetry, but his elegies are his most notable achievements - particularly the masterly *cywyddau* he wrote in memory of *Siôn Brwynog* ('y gwr mwya gerais'), of his old master *Gruffudd Hiraethog*, and of Owain ap Gwilym, poets every one. Of these three *cywyddau*, which are among the best elegies in the language, the last two referred to, as well as that of *Gruffudd ap Tomas of Madryn*, are in the form of a dialogue between the author and the dead man - a style which was quite new at that time. Apart from his poetry there still survive in the manuscripts pedigrees and coats of arms done by the poet's own hand as well as a glossary prepared by him.

Author

Brinley Rees, (2001)

Sources

J. C. Morrice (ed.), *Barddoniaeth Wiliam Llyn* (1908)

Reports on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language (Historical Manuscripts Commission 1898–1910)

Further Reading

J. Jones ('Myrddin Fardd'), *William Lleyrn* (Treffynnon 1897)

Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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