

BLEGYWRYD (fl. c. 945), an authority on the ancient laws of Wales

Name: Blegywryd
Parent: Einiawn
Gender: Male
Occupation: an authority on the ancient laws of Wales
Area of activity: Law; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Stephen Joseph Williams

Several of the oldest manuscripts of the laws testify to the importance of Blegywryd in the work of the council which **Howel the Good** (Hywel Dda) caused to be assembled in the ' White House on the Taf in Dyfed,' c. 945. There is mention of the selection of thirteen learned men from among the large congregation to codify and edit the laws, and since Blegywryd is the only one mentioned by name it is likely that he was foremost among them. He is called 'athro' (master), 'yr un ysgolhaig doethaf' (the one most learned scholar), 'clericum doctissimum,' and also 'Howeli turbe legis doctor' (master of law to **Howel's** retinue). It is, therefore, not easy to decide whether he was a cleric or not. It has been supposed, however, that it is to him (and his brother) that reference is made in 'The Book of Llandaf' ('Liber Landavensis') in the words 'famosissimus ille uir bledcuirit filius enniaun' (that most famous man, Blegywryd son of Einiawn) and in the mention of two lay witnesses, 'bledcuirit & riderch filii enniaun' (Blegywryd and Rhydderch sons of Einiawn). If this supposition is true we have here evidence that he was a layman, that his father was named Einiawn, and that he lived in Gwent in 955.

Whatever status and office Blegywryd held, there is reason to believe that to his genius should be attributed a major share of the greatness of that magnificent codification known by the name of the ' Laws of Hywel Dda.'

His name is chiefly associated with one 'code' of these laws, namely the ' Dimetian Code ' or the ' Book of Blegywryd.' But it is also believed that this 'code' is more closely related than the others to the original codification made in the age of **Hywel Dda**.

Author

Professor Stephen Joseph Williams, (1896 - 1992)

Sources

J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*(London 1911), 340-1

Williams and Powell, *Cyfreithiau Hywel Dda yn Llyfr Blegywryd (dull Dyfed) argraffiad beirniadol ac eglurhaol*

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