

ELIDIR SAIS, a poet of the end of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th.

Name: Elidir Sais
Parent: Gwalchmai ap Meilyr
Gender: Male
Occupation: a poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: David Myrddin Lloyd

He composed elegies upon **Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd** (died 1195), and **Ednyfed Fychan** (died 1246). He was not English, for we learn from **Gwilym Ddu** (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, 277b) that he sprang 'from the wise men of Anglesey in the bosom of the sea.' **Gwilym Ddu** ranks his work with that of other leading poets as a 'correct canon' or a model of poetry. Most of his poems are religious, and are to be found in **Dr. Henry Lewis's** *Hen Gerddi Crefyddol* (together with a note on their authenticity in the introduction, xi). Elidir does not appear to have approved of **Llywelyn the Great's** aggressive policy. He mourns the death of **Rhodri** very bitterly, and laments that there is no one left to 'curb aggressors.' **Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd** was forced by the rise of his nephew, **Llywelyn**, to retreat to England, and this is considered by Elidir to be a tyranny second only to the capture of the Holy Sepulchre by **Saladin** (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, 243a). It is no wonder that he had to plead for **Llywelyn's** favour, and in the latter's death in 1240 he sees only a further proof that the oppression of the weak does not pay. It is clear that he was out of sympathy with the main trend of history in the Wales of his day: local boundaries were not to be violated ('Think what you are doing when you violate a border'). He gave of his best to his religious poetry. 'I shall be a poet to God while I remain a man.' He speaks of 'learned books' that are not to be doubted, and some of his ideas suggest that he was not without knowledge of the religious writings of his day. In his elegy upon **Ednyfed Fychan**, the tradition mentioned by **Sir J. E. Lloyd** (*A History of Wales*, 684) that that statesman had had a military career is borne out. A son of the 'lord' **Rhys ap Gruffydd** (1132 - 1197) was called **Hywel Sais** (he died 1204) because he had been forced to live for years in England; and it is not inconceivable that the attitude of Elidir Sais towards **Llywelyn the Great** had compelled him to do the same. In *Rec. Caern.*, 48, **Meilyr**, **Dafydd**, and **Elidir** are given as the names of three sons of **Gwalchmai**. **Gwilym Ddu's** words from the wise men of Anglesey are very understandable if this Elidir is our poet.

Author

David Myrddin Lloyd, (1909 - 1981)

Sources

The Myvyrian archaiology of Wales (Denbigh 1870), 240b-5b
The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest (Llanbedrog 1911), 1143-6
Hen Gerddi Crefyddol (Cardiff 1931) (ed. Henry Lewis)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Elidir Sais](#)

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