

GRIFFITH, PIRS or PIERS (1568 - 1628), squire and adventurer

Name: Pirs Griffith
Date of birth: 1568
Date of death: 1628
Parent: Catherine Griffith (née Mostyn)
Parent: Rhys Griffith
Gender: Male
Occupation: squire and adventurer
Area of activity: Land Ownership; Travel and Exploration
Author: Thomas Richards

Son of **Sir Rhys Griffith** (died 1580) of Penrhyn, Caernarfonshire. On his father's death he came under the jurisdiction of the court of wards, which led to a particularly detailed 'ousterlemain' upon the Penrhyn lands and the return to Pirs of a considerable overcharge upon the estate by the officials of that court. He is reputed to have been in the Armada actions of 1588, but J. K. Laughton in the *D.N.B.* has serious misgivings about the evidence, and these misgivings are rather deepened by the fact that Griffith was a minor at the time (a fact of which Laughton was unaware). He also discounts the romance attaching to Griffith's piracies and adventures; he only admits, and that doubtfully, the Cork episode of 1603; but the Penrhyn private papers (no. 88) contain a definite commission from the Admiralty to the mayor of Caernarvon and other gentlemen to appraise a cargo of oil, olives, and silk found on the Spanish ship *Speranza* and brought in by Piers Griffith and his crew to Aber Cegin in 1600. Possibly Griffith joined in the ventures of **Thomas Prys** of Plas Iolyn; it is a fact that **Prys** appears in one of the Penrhyn documents (no. 119). Whether his more or less irregular activities involved Pirs in crippling financial penalties is not clear, but there is no doubt that the years 1600-1612 saw him dissipating his estate by a series of heavy mortgages to London capitalists like the **Myddeltons** and the **Batemans**; in September 1614, he mortgaged a large part of his Cororion lands to **Henry Rowlands**, bishop of Bangor. His affairs went to the court of chancery in 1616; it was reported that he was brought to the court in charge of the warden of Fleet prison; by the end of that year it may be said that any effective control he had over the Penrhyn lands had disappeared. Eventually, by a complicated series of transactions, the whole estate became the property of **Lord Keeper Williams**, later archbishop, a member of the collateral house of **Cochwillan**. In 1622 Pirs is described as 'late of Penrhyn'; in 1623, 'of London.' He died in 1628, and was buried in Westminster abbey. All his children died before him. Curiously, though he is usually referred to as 'Pirs' or 'Pyrsgruffudd', he himself almost invariably spelt his name 'Perys.'

See further the article **Griffith** of Penrhyn family.

Author

Thomas Richards, (1878 - 1962)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

J. E. Griffith, *Pedigrees of Anglesey and Carnarvonshire Families* (1914), 106, 184-5

Penrhyn Manuscripts at University College North Wales Library, Bangor (U.C.N.W.), 1-420

panegyrics and elegies, e.g. *Cardiff Manuscript* 11/1/96, 20/194

NLW Archives: **Llanstephan MS 122: Poetry** (282)

NLW Archives: **Llanstephan MS 124: Poetry** (239)

NLW Archives: **NLW MS 3021F** (148, 467-92, 493-596)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: **Piers Griffith**

Additional Links

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