

GRUFFUDD ap NICOLAS (fl. 1415-1460), an esquire and a leading figure in the local administration of the principality of South Wales in the middle of the 15th century

Name: Gruffudd ap Nicolas

Spouse: Sian ferch Siencyn ap Rhys ap Dafydd

Spouse: Mabli Dwnn

Child: Mary ferch Gruffudd ap Nicolas

Child: Mawd ferch Gruffydd ap Nicolas

Child: Thomas ap Gruffudd ap Nicolas

Child: John ap Gruffudd ap Nicolas

Child: Owain ap Gruffudd ap Nicolas

Parent: Sioned ferch Guffudd ap Llywelyn Foethus

Parent: Nicolas ap Phylip ap Syr Elidir Ddu

Gender: Male

Occupation: esquire and a leading figure in the local administration of the principality of South Wales in the middle of the 15th century

Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration; Royalty and Society

Author: Evan David Jones

It is likely that he was born before the end of the 14th c. Nothing is known of his early years, but it is said that he was the posthumous son of Nicolas ap Phylip ap Syr Elidir Ddu (one of the knights of the Sepulchre) by his wife Jennet, daughter of Gruffydd ap Llewelyn Foethus. The first authentic record of him is as the holder of the office of king's approver for the lordship and new town of Dynevor in 1425. He was sheriff of Carmarthenshire in 1436. With Edmund Beaufort, parts of the lands of Phillip Clement were demised to him in 1437. He was a power to be feared in West Wales in 1438, according to the evidence of Margaret Malefant in a petition to Parliament. He was farmer of the lordship of Dynevor in 1439, and his son JOHN shared the office with him. In that same year we find his son THOMAS escheator for Cardiganshire. In 1442-3, he again came to the notice of the authorities in London, when he and the abbot of Whitland were summoned to the metropolis and the Privy Council ordered the arrest of his son Owen. Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, was his patron, and he received, 24 July 1443, the custody of the lordship of Caron and the commote of Pennarth during the minority of Maud, heiress of William Clement. He held sessions on behalf of duke Humphrey in the counties of Carmarthen and Cardigan. When the English inhabitants of North Wales towns petitioned Parliament in 1444, against the denization of more Welshmen, he and William Bulkeley were excepted by name. He was placed on a commission to enquire into felonies committed by **David ap Meredith** in Aberystwyth 2 July 1445. The fall of his patron in 1447 brought him into trouble, and he was imprisoned with other members of duke Humphrey's retinue. He was soon released and managed to retain the confidence of the court, continuing to act for the Justice of South Wales and, occasionally, for the chamberlain. John Delabere, bishop of S. Davids, 1447- c. 1460, committed his bishopric to his care, and the duke of York obtained licence, 13 May 1449, to grant him and the bishop the castle, manor, and town of Narberth. He and his son Thomas were placed on a commission for the defence of the ports of south-west Wales, to muster forces, and erect beacons, 7 October 1450. About this time, when he was at the zenith of his power, the Carmarthen eisteddfod was held. The date and details are uncertain - reports vary between 1451 and 1453. Some maintain that it lasted three months at his cost at Dynevor and others state that it lasted a fortnight and that it was held at Carmarthen. It is agreed that Gruffudd ap Nicolas was judge over the poets, and that the chair was awarded to **Dafydd ab Edmwnd**. It is pretty certain also that the eisteddfod revised the bardic metres and regulated the bardic fraternity. In 1454-5, the castle of Carregcennen was repaired and garrisoned upon his command. On the verge of the Wars of the Roses, he was on good terms with the court of Henry VI, and after the Yorkist victory at S. Albans, 1455, he lost some of his offices. Yet, he appears to have taken offence at the coming of **Edmund, earl of Richmond**, to Pembroke, in 1456, if he was the 'Gruffith Suoh' (*sic.*) who, with the **earl of Richmond**, was reported, 7 June 1456, by John Bocking, in a letter to John Paston, to be at war greatly in Wales. However, he and his sons, Thomas and Owen, were granted general pardons on 26 October 1456. His name then disappears from the records. Had he been alive on 1 March 1459 it is difficult to imagine that his name would have been left out of a commission entrusted to his two sons, Thomas and Owen, with **Jasper** and **Owen Tudor**. It is, therefore, impossible to accept the reports that he was mortally wounded either at the battle of Wakefield, 1460, or at Mortimer's Cross, 1461. His praises were sung by **Dafydd ab Edmwnd**, **Hywel ap Dafydd ap Ieuan ap Rhys**, Rhys Llwyd ap Rhys ap Rhicert, **Gwilym ap Ieuan Hen**, and **Lewis Glyn Cothi**. It is probable that the *englynion* attributed to him and **Owen Dwnn** and **Griffith Benrhaw** had their origin in the humour of bardic festivities. It is said that he was thrice married: (1) to Mabel, daughter of Meredith ap Henry Dwnn, (2) to a daughter of Sir Thomas Perrot, and (3) to Jane, daughter of Jenkin ap Rhys ap Dafydd of Gilfach-wen. Three of his sons have been named, John who disappears early from the records, Owen heir of Bryn y Beirdd, and **Lewis Glyn Cothi**'s companion in hiding, and Thomas, who was slain in a skirmish at Pennal, probably during **lord Herbert**'s expedition into North Wales in 1468. He was the father of **Sir Rhys ap Thomas** (1449 - 1525).

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

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