

GWALCHMAI ap MEILYR (fl. 1130-1180),an Anglesey court poet

Name: Gwalchmai ap Meilyr
Spouse: Efa wraig Gwalchmai ap Meilyr
Child: Goronwy ap Gwalchmai
Child: Elidir Sais
Child: Dafydd ap Gwalchmai
Child: Meilir ap Gwalchmai
Child: Einion ap Gwalchmai
Parent: Meilyr Brydydd
Gender: Male
Occupation: court poet
Area of activity: Poetry; Royalty and Society
Author: David Myrddin Lloyd

one of the earlier Gogynfeirdd. He sang to **Owain Gwynedd** (died 1170) to his brothers, to **Dafydd** and **Rhodri** his sons, and also to **Madog ap Maredudd** of Powys (died 1160). Other extant poems of his are his 'Gorhoffedd' (vaunting poem), his 'Dream,' and his verses to Eve, his wife. The Hendreg. MS. and the 'Red Book of Hergest' also attribute to him an ode to God which according to *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* is the work of his son, Meilyr. In one of the poems to **Owain Gwynedd** there is internal evidence that Gwalchmai was the son of **Meilyr**, court poet to **Gruffudd ap Cynan** (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, 144b, 16-17 - 'My father sang the praises of his powerful royal father'). The two references in Gwalchmai's poems to the fact that he sang to Cadwallawn, son of **Gruffudd ap Cynan**, prove that he was composing poetry before the latter's death in 1132.

In one of the poems to **Owain Gwynedd** there are references to that prince's campaigns in South-west Wales in 1136-8, and in another there is a remarkable description of the battle of Tal Moelfre (1157). There is mention of a misunderstanding between Gwalchmai and **Owain Gwynedd** in one of these poems, and there is no extant elegy by him to this great prince to whom he had sung so much. In an ode to **Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd** there is a reference to **Dafydd's** removal in 1175 to the east of the river Conway, and although the poet complains that he is not loved by **Rhodri**, he lived to sing his praises at a later date.

The 'Gorhoffedd' was sung during the lifetime of **Owain Gwynedd**. It contains references to **Owain's** campaigns in South Wales in 1136-8, and around Rhuddlan (1150?). This poem, which combines nature, love, and 'vaunting' themes, is one of the finest achievements of the Welsh muse in the 12th century.

Gwalchmai had several sons. Poetry composed by two (or three) of them is extant, viz. **Einion** and Meilyr ap Gwalchmai and, possibly, **Elidir Sais**. *The Record of Caernarvon* reveals the connection of Gwalchmai and his sons with Trewalchmai in Anglesey, and also that three of his sons were named Meilyr, Dafydd and Elidir. In his 'Dream,' Gwalchmai laments the loss of Goronwy, and in a series of elegiac *englynion* to the retinue of **Owain Gwynedd** (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, 163b) mention is made of a Goronwy, son of Gwalchmai.

Author

David Myrddin Lloyd, (1909 - 1981)

Sources

The Myvyrian archaiology of Wales (Denbigh 1870), 142b-149b

NLW Archives: NLW MS 6680B: *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*, 4a-14b

The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest (Llanbedrog 1911), 1184-6

J. Lloyd-Jones, *The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes*

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Gwalchmai ap Meilyr](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q2076638](#)

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