

GWILYM TEW (fl. c. 1460-1480), one of the bards of Glamorgan

Name: Gwilym Tew
Gender: Male
Occupation: one of the bards of Glamorgan
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Poetry
Author: Griffith John Williams

The pedigree books describe him as the son of Rhys Brydydd, but some details which are available suggest that he was a brother to that bard. It is evident, therefore, that he was a member of the most renowned family of major bards that Glamorgan ever produced, descendants of **Rhys Fychan** of Tir Iarl, of the line of **Einion ap Collwyn**. Although Rhys Brydydd lived in Llanharan it is probable that Gwilym Tew lived in Llangynwyd, the original centre of the tribe; **Dafydd Benwyn** calls him 'Gwilym tew brydydd o dir jarll.' His *cywyddau* show that he flourished c. 1460-1480. He sings to the gentry of upper Glamorgan and to the descendants of the Normans and of the English in the 'Vale' of Glamorgan, and 'itinerated', as a bard, to Kidwelly, Ewyas, and, perhaps to Maelienydd. He is not important as a poet. His *cywyddau* and *awdlau* are not notable and he cannot be classed with the major bards of North Wales of that period. But he is important as a pencerdd and as one who was steeped in the bardic traditions. There is no doubt that he, like his contemporaries, **Dafydd ab Edmwnd** and **Dafydd Nanmor**, was seeking to arrange and put in better order the rules and types of verse which were then practised; this explains why he wrote an *awdl enghreifftiol* (a 'pattern' or 'exemplifying' *awdl*), wherein he uses measures that were not acknowledged by the old teachers, the 'ofer fesurau' ('false measures') as they were described. And that is the *awdl* which **John David Rhys** includes in his *Grammar* (1592) as an exemplar of the odes of the 'first age.'

It was not with bardic verse alone that Gwilym Tew concerned himself. He and **Dafydd Nanmor** wrote their names in 'Llyfr Aneirin' (the 'Book of Aneirin'); he says that he owned the manuscript. He studied it, collected the strange words found in it, and attempted to explain them. Moreover, he is the first Glamorgan bard who can be proved to have been a copyist of manuscripts. **Peniarth MS 51** is in his hand; in it is a collection of Welsh poems and tractates, including the 'Donatus,' i.e. the grammar that was studied in the bardic schools. Gwilym Tew is, therefore, a fairly important figure in the history of Welsh literature in the 15th century.

His *cywyddau* and *awdlau* have been collected by J. M. Williams, Swansea; this collection is now amongst the University of Wales theses in the National Library.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, i, 216-25

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 1948, 43-8

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Gwilym Tew](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q5623636](#)

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