

## GWYN (GWYNN, GWYNNE or WYNN), JOHN (died 1574), lawyer, placeman, and educational benefactor

**Name:** John Gwyn  
**Date of death:** 1574  
**Parent:** John Wyn ap Maredudd  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** lawyer, placeman, and educational benefactor  
**Area of activity:** Education; Law; Philanthropy  
**Author:** Arthur Herbert Dodd

Born at Gwydir, Llanrwst, he was the fifth and youngest (or possibly fourth) son of **John Wyn ap Meredydd**, a direct descendant of **Owain Gwynedd**. His eldest brother **Morys** was the father of **Sir John Wynn** of Gwydir and another, Robert (third son), who built Plas Mawr, Conway, became second husband of Dorothy Williams, grandmother of **archbishop John Williams**. John Gwyn entered Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1545, becoming B.A. in 1548, and was then elected Fellow of S. John's, where he took his M.A. in 1551 and LL.D. in 1560. When in 1551 Henry and Charles Brandon, dukes of Suffolk and members of the college, died of sweating sickness, Gwyn was among those who wrote commemorative verses. He served as proctor in 1555-6, but the assertion by his nephew **Sir John** (in his *The history of the Gwydir family*) that in this capacity he was responsible for the arrest of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, on the failure of his attempt to enthrone lady Jane Grey, cannot be accepted, since the arrest at Cambridge took place two years earlier and under different proctors. In 1550, while still only a B.A., he acquired (apparently by lease from the chapter) the prebendal stall of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd in Bangor cathedral, resigning it next year to his second brother Griffith - only to resume it in 1555, after which he kept it until his death, defying the efforts of archbishop Parker to dislodge him. In 1556 he was presented to the sinecure rectory of Llanrhaeadr in Cymmerch. He was reported by **bishop Rowland Meyrick** as one of four lay lawyers benefited in the diocese. He seems to have been entirely nonresident, remaining at Cambridge till he completed his doctorate, then moving to London Paternoster Row), where he was admitted in 1560 an Advocate of the Doctors Commons and next year to the Middle Temple, and used his influence in the capital to promote family interests in North Wales. He represented Cardigan borough in Parliament in 1553 and again in 1563, and Caernarvon county in 1572. He acquired from the Crown a lease for twenty-one years of the office of 'rhapglaw' of Cardiganshire (at an annual rental of twenty nobles) in 1563, and about the same time the lordship of Maenan, part of the estates of the dissolved abbey of Aberconway; it was later alleged by **Dr. Elis Prys** that he also tried to obtain through Leicester, as lord of Denbigh (1564), a grant of the commote of Arduwy. **Sir John Wynn** describes him as 'learned and a Wise man and a bountifull housekeeper.'

He died, unmarried, in 1574, having 'gathered a great Estate' which he left to his brother and executor GRIFFITH, with provision in his will (1 June 1574, quoted *Cal. of Wynn Papers*, 54; Baker, *Hist. of S. John's*, i, 421-2; Barber and Lewis, *Hist. of Friars School*, 170-1) for £40 a year out of the Maenan estate to maintain three Fellows and six scholars at S. John's, with preference for the fellowships to natives of Llanfair and Llanrhaeadr, the commotes of Maenan and Nantconway and the counties of Caernarvon, Denbigh, and Merioneth, and for the scholarships to pupils of Friars School, Bangor. Unsuccessful attempts were made to upset the will on the ground that Crown lands could not be devised without leave save to the heir at law, but Griffith Wynn and his co-executor **Dr. Henry Jones** (see under **William Awbrey**) agreed to reduce the foundation to two Fellows and three scholars, the former to be chosen in the first instance by Griffith Wynn and afterwards by the college from among Gwyn scholars or from Friars or Ruthin school, the latter by Wynn and his heirs in consultation with the masters of Friars and Ruthin, failing which the college could nominate from the three counties. Among those who benefited from the bequest were Griffith's son **Owen Gwynn**, master of S. John's, his great-grand-nephew **John Williams**, archbishop of York, **David Dolben**, bishop of Bangor and several members of the **Bodwrda** family. In consequence of a decree in chancery in 1650 the fellowships were extinguished on the ground that the estate could not support them. The scholarships, however, were retained, and until the Restoration they carried with them a preferential claim to foundation fellowships, but they fell into disuse in the late 18th or early 19th century.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd**, (1891 - 1975)

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