

MEREDUDD ap RHYS (fl. 1450-1485), gentleman, cleric, and poet

Name: Meredudd ap Rhys
Spouse: Angharad ferch Madog ap Robert
Parent: Rhys ap Gruffudd
Gender: Male
Occupation: gentleman, cleric, and poet
Area of activity: Land Ownership; Poetry; Religion; Royalty and Society
Author: Thomas Roberts

His name is certainly that which is found in the books of pedigrees of **Robert Vaughan** of Hengwrt and **Edward ap Roger** of Ruabon - Meredudd ap Rhys married Angharad, daughter of Madog ap Robert of Cristionydd in the parish of Ruabon. His pedigree is traced back to Rhys Sais and **Tudur Trefor**, who were the ancestors of many of the gentle families in the Maelors and the Marches : Meredudd ap Rhys ap Gruffudd ap Madog Llwyd [ap Gruffudd] ap Iorwerth Foel ap Iorwerth Fychan ab Iorwerth Hen ... ap Rhys Sais ... ap Tudur Trefor. Other manuscripts connect his great-grandfather, Madog Llwyd of Plas Nanheudwy, and his father Rhys ap Gruffudd, with Plas Halchdun - Halkyn near Chirk probably. But Meredudd lived at Ruabon in Welsh Maelor, where he was the parish priest - in 1430, according to the historian of the diocese of St Asaph, though no evidence has been found that he became vicar so early in the century. It is also noted that he was rector of Meifod and rector of Welshpool in 1450, both livings being probably sinecures.

Meredudd had a long life. He was living in 1483 when he wrote an elegy for king Edward IV. And about this time, i.e. probably in the 80's, he is accused by **Guto'r Glyn** of envying him and coveting his place in Valle Crucis abbey where he was spending his old age with the abbot, **Dafydd ap Ieuan ap Iorwerth**. We shall probably not be far off the mark if we attribute the period of his activity to the years 1440-50 to 1485. Meredudd ap Rhys won distinction not only as a poet but as a teacher of poets. It was he who taught **Dafydd ab Edmwnd** who later became the greatest authority of the 15th century on the classical metres and *cynganedd*. No fewer than twenty-one *cywyddau* which can be attributed with certainty to him are to be found in various MSS. - these are poems of love and nature, private poems and social poems, prophetic poems, and poems in adoration of God and the Virgin Mary. Only some five have ever been printed. He had a lively imagination and his love poems are as fanciful as those of his distinguished pupil. He had made a careful study of the works of the earlier poets and had appreciated the greatness of **Dafydd ap Gwilym**. He had, like the master, written a *cywydd* to the wind, a *cywydd* which is an outstanding example of his craft at its best. He was moved by the death of two of his priestly friends to write lyrical *cywyddau* - one in disparagement of winter which had prevented them from meeting more often and one in praise of spring which had been their ally.

His descriptive poems are excellent - an amusing and witty example is that on the coracle. Another admirable *cywydd* was that which asked for a fishing-net - an instance of the 'begging poem' at its best. Meredudd was fond of fishing in the river Alun and because of his hobby would compare himself with Madog ab Owain Gwynedd ' who sought nor lands nor flocks nor herds save in the vasty deep.' These were the words so utterly misused by **Theophilus Evans** in *Drych y Prif Oesoedd* to bolster up the tradition that Madog had discovered America in the 12th century.

Moreover, Meredudd ap Rhys must be numbered among the seers of the 15th century He provides evidence of the distress and anarchy prevailing in Wales in his day and is sometimes inclined to doubt the teaching of the book of fate that things will take a turn for the better. He was sick of interminable warfare, of the disorder on every hand, of hearing every day of the killing of this lord or that. Accordingly, he wrote of the uncertainty of life but continued to hope that some day all would be well. He praised king Edward IV who, he hoped, would put an end to anarchy and restore peace. He also wrote an elegy for him, for was there not some tiny trickle of Welsh princely blood in his veins, thanks to his descent from Gwladus Ddu, daughter of **Llywelyn the Great** ?

As might have been expected, Meredudd wrote a number of religious *cywyddau*. In his didactic poems he wrote of God as the creator of the world, of the passion of Christ, and of the intercession of the Virgin Mary. He was a firm believer in the miraculous powers of the images and relics worshipped in the churches, and tells the story of the man who was cured of an agonising pain in his hip through the miraculous intervention of the 'Living Image' at S. John's, Chester; and he asserts that in that church hearing was restored to the deaf, speech to the dumb, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. He warned his people against avarice and pride, and against coveting land and wealth; he also urged them to worship God and to be charitable to the poor, that in the end they might save their eternal souls.

Author

Thomas Roberts, (1885 - 1960)

Sources

NLW Archives: Peniarth MS 74: Pedigrees

NLW Archives: Peniarth MS 128: Llyfr Edward ap Roger

NLW Archives: Peniarth MS 132: Achau

NLW Archives: Peniarth MS 287: Robert Vaughan's book of pedigrees

and other manuscripts

D. R. Thomas, *A History of the Diocese of St. Asaph* (1874)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Maredudd ap Rhys](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q6758766](#)

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