

MIDDLETON (MYDDELTON), WILLIAM (c. 1550 - c. 1600), poet, soldier, and sailor

Name: William Middleton
Date of birth: c. 1550
Date of death: c. 1600
Parent: Ffowc Middleton
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet, soldier, and sailor
Area of activity: Military; Poetry
Author: Griffith John Williams

son of Ffowc Middleton of Archwedlog, Llansannan, Denbighshire. It is often stated that he was educated at Oxford, but that cannot be proved. He served **Henry Herbert, earl of Pembroke**; in 1575 he sang an elegiac ode on the death of **Catherine, countess of Pembroke**. In 1585-6 he was with the earl of Leicester, fighting against Spaniards in the Low Countries; it has been said that he was at the battle in which **Sir Philip Sidney** was killed. In all probability he was a member of the force sent to Portugal in 1589 with the object of placing Don Antonio on the throne. After his return he seems to have served the queen on sea and to have won renown as a brave sailor. He is said to have been the 'Captaine Middleton' who was sent in 1591 by the earl of Cumberland (who was with the fleet near the coasts of Portugal) to warn lord Thomas Howard, then at the Azores waiting for Spanish treasure ships, that a strong fleet was sailing to attack him. Then followed the famous fight between the 'Revenge' and the Spanish fleet. But it cannot be proved that this was the poet - many other captains bore the surname Middleton. It is difficult to trace his career after this time. He was in the West Indies in 1596 and it may be surmised that he spent the greater part of his time on sea at this period. He died sometime before 1603, for an elegy upon him was printed in the *Psalmae*, published that year.

William Middleton is a good example of the cultured gentleman living in the time of the Renaissance. He learnt the craft of Welsh bardism in his youth and, in 1593-4, published a book which described that craft - *Bardhoniaeth, neu brydyddiaeth*. He did not describe this in the way the *penceirddiaid* (highest order of bards) would do; he explained its chief essentials in such a way that every Welsh gentleman could practise it. He desired to see created in Wales the same kind of literary life as was to be found in the other West European countries in that age. *Awdlau, cywyddau*, and *englynion* by him are to be found in manuscripts and, in 1603, **Thomas Salesbury**, London, published his Welsh translation of the Psalms, a translation written in the measures of the *penceirddiaid*. A fragment of another book by him, printed in 1595, was discovered a few years ago; this contains some of the Psalms together with some *cywyddau*. He was one of the earliest Welsh poets to look upon the printing press as a medium for the dissemination of his works. Middleton is, therefore, an important figure in the history of Welsh literature during the second half of the 16th century.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

Barddoniaeth neu Brydyddiaeth (1930), 1930, 1-45

Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society, iv, 257-61

The Denbighshire Society in London Handbook (1937-8), 1937-8, 27-41

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Middleton](#)

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