

CARADOG FYNACH (died 1124), recluse

Name: Caradog Fynach
Date of death: 1124
Gender: Male
Occupation: recluse
Area of activity: Religion
Author: John Edward Lloyd

He was born of a good family in Brycheiniog and received a literary education. His accomplishments, which included the playing of the harp, and his companionable temper, led to his entering the service of [Rhys ap Tewdwr](#). He rose high in the prince's favour, but entirely forfeited it when he had the misfortune to lose two valuable greyhounds entrusted to his care. His master's indignant threats drove him from the court and he resolved to embrace religion. He first found a foothold at Llandaff, where he was tonsured by bishop Herwald; ere long, he was attracted to the solitary life and made a home for himself as monk at the deserted and overgrown church of Llangenydd in Gower. His next move was to S. Davids, where he was ordained priest; the 'island' of Barry (Llanrhian) on the north coast of Pembrokeshire, which was to be his next place of retreat, he found too open to Scandinavian attack, and the bishop of S. Davids gave him instead a hermitage at the church of [S. Ismaels](#) in Rhos, now known as Haroldston S. Issels. Here he spent the rest of his life, though room must be found for a visit to Bardsey, if he is to be identified with the 'master Caradog, a very learned man' who came to the island to see the hermit Elgar about this time. Early in the reign of Henry I a change took place in the local population; Flemish settlers dislodged the native Welsh of Rhos and Caradog's relations with his new neighbour, Tancard of Haverford West, proved none too easy. He died on Low Sunday (13 April), 1124; despite the efforts of Tancard to retain the body, it was taken to S. Davids and buried in the north transept of the cathedral. A cross and chapel long marked the spot on Newgale sands where a halt was made on the journey.

[Giraldus Cambrensis](#) wrote a life of Caradog, not now extant, but probably represented in substance by that contained in *Nova Legenda Anglie*, 1901, i, 174-6. He took it to Rome and read it to Innocent III, in an endeavour to secure his countryman's canonization and was so far successful as to obtain a letter from the pope appointing the abbots of Whitland, S. Dogmaels, and Strata Florida, a commission to inquire into the case (8 May 1200). The first two were not inclined to do anything to enhance the credit of their antagonist in the fight for S. Davids, and accordingly the matter got no further. Lawrenny on Milford Haven has a church named after Caradog, and a well near Haroldston was sacred to his memory.

Author

Sir John Edward Lloyd, (1861 - 1947)

Sources

The Lives of the British Saints, ii, 75-8

The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv (Oxford 1893), 2, 279

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Published date: 1959

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