

CYNDDELW BRYDYDD MAWR (fl. 1155-1200), the leading 12th century Welsh court poet

Name: Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr
Child: Dygynnelw ap Cynddelw
Gender: Male
Occupation: leading 12th century Welsh court poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: David Myrddin Lloyd

He was recognized by poets of the two succeeding centuries (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*^[↗], 111a, 164a, and 204b) as a leading master of eulogy to princes. He composed in *awdl* and *englyn* metres. The grammarians refer to the *clogyrnach* metre as the 'manner of Cynddelw,' and as far as we know he was the first to make extensive use of the *englyn unodl union*. Two traditions are seen to merge in his work - that of the panegyric *awdl* strongly influenced by the poetry of *Aneirin* and *Taliesin* and that of the Powysian *englynion*.

In the course of a bardic disputation early in Cynddelw's career (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*^[↗], 154a), he was reminded that he had sprung from no family of poets, and although his opponent, *Seisyll Bryffwrch*, was concerned in minimizing his achievements, he refers to him as 'Cynddelw the big, giant of gatherings'; hence it is to be presumed that he was called 'Mawr' in the first place on account of his size. He had at least one son, named Dygynnelw, who was killed in battle (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*^[↗], 185a).

Cynddelw was appointed leading poet to the court of *Madog ap Maredudd*, prince of Powys (died 1160). His two best extant poems resulting from his connection with *Madog's* court are 'In praise of Eve,' who was the prince's daughter, and the fine series of eighteen *englynion* in which he laments the death of *Madog* and his son Llywelyn, with whom was buried the unity of Powys. Cynddelw then turned to sing the praises of *Owain Gwynedd*, and his poetic gifts are seen at their height in the 'Elegy to Owain,' 1170. Henceforward, and until the end of the century, he sang to a number of the leading princes of Gwynedd, Powys, and Deheubarth, and in this respect he is the earliest poet known to have taken the whole of Wales as his field. He also sang *awdlau* to God, and his 'Song to Tysilio' is largely in praise of Meifod. His only other extant religious poem is the 'Deathbed song.' His poetry is mainly characterized by a quality described by *W. J. Gruffydd* as 'primeval starkness.'

The last of his compositions which can be dated precisely is the series of *englynion* to *Llywelyn ap Iorwerth* (*The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*^[↗], 189b), in which the rise of that prince is described as far as his capture of Mold in January 1199. (His authorship of the later *englynion* entitled the 'Circuit of Llywelyn' is very dubious.) Part of his 'Deathbed song' is found in the 'Black Book of Carmarthen,' and a little of his work also appears in Pen. MS. 3, which also belongs to the first half of the 13th century. Most of Cynddelw's extant work is found in the Hendregadredd manuscript, a considerable part in the 'Red Book of Hergest,' and all which has survived has been collected together in *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*^[↗]

Author

David Myrddin Lloyd, (1909 - 1981)

Sources

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr](#)

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