

DAFYDD DDU ATHRO HIRADDUG (before 1400), a poet

Name: Dafydd Ddu Athro Hiraddug
Gender: Male
Occupation: a poet
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Griffith John Williams

the man whose name is associated with the first bardic grammar (*Ilyfr cerddwriaeth*) which we have, i.e. a work dealing with the art of bardism and verse, and containing also an abridgement of the Latin grammar which was used in schools in the Middle Ages. Scarcely anything of him is known, but as Moel Hiraddug is the name of a hill near Rhuddlan, perhaps [Thomas Wiliems](#) is right when he says, in Mostyn MS. 110, that he was a man 'o Degeingyl,' i.e. from what is modern Flintshire. [Dr. John Davies](#), Mallwyd (died 1644), states, in Pen. MS. 49, that he was ' archdeacon of Diserth '; as Dafydd Ddu is called ' Athro ' (teacher, etc.) and that term sometimes connotes (as is said in the bardic grammar) a particular type of cleric, it may be that [Dr. Davies](#) was recording some tradition which he had learnt in his youth in the neighbourhood of the Vale of Clwyd. In the 18th century it was maintained that his was the gravestone in the church of Tremeirchion, bearing an inscription containing the name David F' Hovel (?) F' Madoc - but that is completely uncertain. According to tradition he was famed for his learning and as a soothsayer, and the famous [Dr. John Dee](#) maintained in 1582 that Dafydd Ddu was Roger Bacon.

Sixteenth century scholars attributed the '*Ilyfr cerddwriaeth*' to Dafydd Ddu and to [Einion Offeiriad](#). [Einion](#) flourished about the beginning of the 14th century; it is sometimes suggested that what Dafydd Ddu did was to add to [Einion](#)'s work. Neither of them is mentioned in the earliest manuscripts of the work except as persons who framed three metres (or measures), three manuscripts maintaining that these were the work of [Einion](#) and the fourth (Pen. MS. 20, written c. 1400 or, possibly, earlier) stating that it was Dafydd Ddu who invented them. Some *cywyddau* are also attributed to him. Possibly the most interesting work associated with his name is the Welsh translation of the 'Office of the Virgin Mary' which was printed in [The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales](#)^[?]. Dafydd Ddu is not mentioned in the earliest manuscripts of this translation, but [Dr. John Davies](#) said in 1631 that it was his work 'hyd y mae pawb yn tybieid' ('according to what everybody thinks'). But no one has as yet solved the problem connected with this translation.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

Thomas Pennant, *A Tour (Tours) in [North] Wales*, 1883, ii, 134

Edward Jones, *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards ...*, 1808, 16

Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1897, 109-14

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 1948, 14-15

An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire. Vol. 2 - County of Flint (1912), item 244

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug](#)

Additional Links

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