

HYWEL ap GRUFFYDD or SYR HYWEL Y FWYALL (of the Battleaxe) (died c. 1381),

Name: Hywel ap Gruffydd
Pseudonym: Syr Hywel Y Fwyall (Of The Battleaxe)
Date of death: c. 1381
Spouse: Tanglwst ferch David Fychan ap Howel
Child: Gruffydd ap Hywel
Parent: Angharad wraig Gruffydd ap Howel
Parent: Gruffydd ab Howel
Gender: Male
Area of activity: Military; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Thomas Jones Pierce

son of Gruffydd ap Hywel (from Collwyn), of Bron-y-Foel in the township of Ystumllyn and the parish of Ynyscynhaiarn, Eifionydd, by Angharad, daughter of Tegwared y Bais Wen. His paternal grandmother was a grand-daughter of [Ednyfed Fychan](#). A younger son, he acquired fame in the French Wars of Edward III. The tradition that he won his spurs at Poitiers is not, however, confirmed by the evidence. Since a year before that battle he was receiving a fee as a knight in royal service, it would appear that there is truth in the alternative tradition that he commanded a corps of Welshmen at Crecy (1346) where he made a substantial contribution to victory, being created a knight-banneret on the field of battle. There is no doubt that he was also present at Poitiers (though the belief that he captured the French king has no foundation), and his famous axe seems to have made a great impression on that occasion. It is said that the Black Prince gave the weapon a place of honour in the royal hall, ordering food to be served before it daily, which was later distributed as alms; instituted at first, perhaps, in a half facetious spirit, this practice became a traditional ceremonial which, according to [Sir John Wynn](#) of Gwydir, was not discontinued until the time of Elizabeth.

Hywel was still in royal service in 1359. It was about this time that he became constable of Criccieth castle (one of several offices of profit conferred upon him by the Crown), at which place he resided during his later years, life in the castle in Hywel's day being vividly described in a poem by [Iolo Goch](#). His wife was Tanglwst, daughter of one Dafydd Fychan ap Hywel; there was one son, Gruffydd, who left no direct heirs. But several old Eifionydd families traced their descent from his elder brother, Einion.

Author

Professor Thomas Jones Pierce, (1905 - 1964)

Sources

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Y Brython, iii, 287-95

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1925-6, 63

Sir John Wynn, *The History of the Gwydir Family* (1927), 1927 ed., 56

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Howel y Fwyall](#)

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