

HYWEL SWRDWAL (fl. 1430-1460), poet

Name: Hywel Swrdwal
Child: Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: John Ellis Caerwyn Williams

His French surname suggests that there was foreign blood in his family and perhaps it is right to connect the name Swrdwal with the ' de Surda Valle ' which is found in the name of the Norman ' Robertus de Surda Valle ' who enlisted under the banner of lord Bohemund (1096) for one of the crusades, according to Matthew Paris. It may be, too, that Hywel Swrdwal was one of the descendants of the Sir Hugh Swrdwal who is said to have been granted the manor of Aberyscir for services rendered to Bernard Newmarch when the latter conquered Brecknock ([Theophilus Jones](#), *History of the County of Brecknock*, 3rd ed., i, 61). However, it is said that Hywel Swrdwal spent the greater part of his life in Cydwain, Montgomeryshire, that he was the bailiff of Newtown between 1454 and 1456, and that apart from writing poetry he wrote a history of Wales in Latin. According to [Fenton](#), Hywel was a member of the commission appointed by Edward IV in 1460 ' to enquire touching the Progenie and Descent of the honourable Name and Family of the Herberts.' This suggests that he was on friendly terms with some of the gentry to whom he addressed *cywyddau*. He wrote an elegaic *cywydd* for [Sir Watcyn Vaughan](#) of Bredwardine, and a laudatory *awdl* to [William, lord Herbert](#). In one of the manuscripts there is found at the end of that *awdl* the Welsh equivalent of ' Hywel Sowrdwal his poem 1450.' If that date is correct it agrees with the other dates, and [Dr. John Davies](#) was near the mark when he gave it as his opinion that Hywel flourished between 1430 and 1460. It is said in *Y Brython*, iii, 137, on the authority of a manuscript in the British Museum, that he was buried at Llanuwchllyn. Hywel Swrdwal's poetry was published by the Bangor Welsh Manuscript Society in 1908.

His works support the tradition that Hywel Swrdwal was a scholar and it is not, therefore, surprising that his son went to Oxford. This son, [Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal](#) was also a poet and before his premature death at Oxford had been exchanging disputatious poems with [Llawdden](#). At that time, [Llawdden](#) appears to have been the parish priest at Machynlleth, and perhaps it was this exchange of poems which gave rise to the tradition that Hywel Swrdwal had lived for some time at Machynlleth - although the tradition may well be true. It should be noted that there is some doubt as to which *cywyddau* should be attributed to the father and which to the son.

Author

Professor John Ellis Caerwyn Williams, (1912 - 1999)

Sources

J. C. Morrice, *Gwaith Barddonol Howel Swrdwal a'i Fab Ieuan* (Bangor 1908)

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies (1894)*, 133-4

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Hywel Swrdwal](#)

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