

LLYWARCH ap LLYWELYN ('Prydydd y Moch'; fl. 1173-1220); the most prominent court-poet of Gwynedd

Name: Llywarch ap Llywelyn
Pseudonym: Prydydd Y Moch
Child: Dafydd Benfras
Gender: Male
Occupation: court-poet
Area of activity: Poetry; Poetry
Author: David Myrddin Lloyd

from the death of **Owain Gwynedd** to the rise of **Llywelyn the Great** to the height of his power. He addresses **Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd** as 'lord of Aberffraw'; this must have been between 1173 and 1175. Fratricidal strife between the princes was the curse of Wales at that time, and the reference to Cain and Abel in the ode to **Rhodri** is very much to the point. The solution advocated by Llywarch was the upholding of the authority of Aberffraw. **Dafydd**, as lord of that court, was 'inherent chief ruler,' but the poet held that he would have to assert his leadership by force and not through affection. Aberffraw was afterwards held, successively, by **Rhodri** and **Gruffydd**, his nephew, but in spite of their weakness, Llywarch persisted in maintaining the 'inherent right' of that court over all the Welsh from Anglesey to Monmouth. His delight at the rise of **Llywelyn the Great** can, therefore, be well understood. Nine poems to his hero written at different stages in that prince's career are extant, and he became his chief court poet. The 'Longer Poem' was apparently occasioned by **Llywelyn's** advance towards Powys, and the poet appeals to the men of that province as a Welshman, pleading that it is better for them to receive a Welsh leader than to be subject to a foreigner. Moreover, he refers in several poems to **Llywelyn's** descent from the Powysian royal line as well as from that of Gwynedd. In the 'Shorter Poem' Llywarch revels in the fulfilment of all his dreams; he sings the growth of **Llywelyn's** power throughout Wales up to the victories of 1220, following which the preeminence of Aberffraw is the pride, the unity, and the success of Wales.

Llywarch also sang the praises of several princes subordinate to **Llywelyn** in Gwynedd and Powys, and likewise to **Rhys Gryg** in the South. The references to Wiston, Narberth, and Haverfordwest in the poem to **Rhys** suggest 1220 rather than 1215. As a result of the newly-found Welsh unity the poet finds a fresh delight in stringing together place-names from all parts of Wales in his verses.

He also sang a complimentary poem to 'Gwenllian the Fair.' In the 'Ode to the Hot Iron,' which refers to a trial by ordeal, he denies having killed a certain Madawg. In the *Hendregadredd MS.*, 'poetry to God' is ascribed to Llywarch, but according to the 'Red Book' and *The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales* this is the work of **Cynddelw**, and the sentiments expressed on the aggression of princes are more in keeping with the views of the latter.

Llywarch's nickname is not easy to explain; possibly his reference to swine in *The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales*, 204 a, 26 may account for it. There is some reason for supposing that he was displeased by the favours granted to his fellow-poet, **Gwilym Ryfel**, at the court of **Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd** (*The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales*, 201a, 58). **Dafydd Benfras**, his successor at the court of **Llywelyn**, may have been his son, and if so, he was his only son (*The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales*, 255 b 5).

Author

David Myrddin Lloyd, (1909 - 1981)

Sources

Llywarch's poetry in

The Myvyrian Archaology of Wales (1801-1807), i, 279-307

NLW Archives: NLW MS 6680B: *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*

The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest (Llanbedrog 1911)

see also Henry Lewis (ed.), *Hen Gerddi Crefyddol* (Cardiff 1931)

J. Lloyd-Jones, *The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes*

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Llywarch ap Llywelyn](#)

Additional Links

VIAF: 305153415

Wikidata: [Q3324117](#)

Published date: 1959

Article Copyright: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/>

Copy to Clipboard

Privacy & Cookies
Copyright
The Project
Help
Contact



LLYFRGEL
THE NATION

