

NICOLAS, DAFYDD (1705? - 1774), poet

Name: Dafydd Nicolas
Date of birth: 1705?
Date of death: 1774
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Griffith John Williams

[T. C. Evans](#) (Cadrawd) thought that he was the man of the same name who was born in Llangynwyd, Glamorganshire, in 1705. According to [Cadrawd](#), the older people spoke of him as one who had kept school in the parish. [Iolo Morganwg](#) listed him with the literary men who were self-educated. He lived afterwards in Ystradyfodwg and perhaps in Glynorrwg and Cwm-gwrach. It is quite possible that he was an itinerant schoolmaster at that time. Towards the middle of the century (or, perhaps, before that) he came to the notice of the [Williams](#) family of Aberpergwm, and that mansion was his home thenceforward until he died. It was maintained during the last century that he was kept there as 'family bard' - the last in Wales, so it was said; but [William Davies](#) of Cringell (1756 - 1823) said in 1795-6 that he was private tutor to the family. He earned a high reputation as a classical scholar and he translated some of Homer's *Iliad* into Welsh - at least, that was the tradition in the Neath valley. [Iolo Morganwg](#) also claimed that Nicolas knew Latin, Greek, and French, and that he was the greatest poet among those whom [Iolo](#) knew. Although he paid little attention to poetry in the strict metres it is evident that he was a rather important figure in the literary revival in Glamorgan. It is his poems in free metre which give him his place as a bard. Two lyrics are attributed to him in *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morgannwg*, 1844, by [Maria Jane Williams](#), songs to be sung to old and later airs. He possessed a special gift for this kind of work, and it would not be inappropriate to describe him as the [Ceiriog](#) of the 18th century. Here is a lyric poet, one who could hear the music of words, a poet who delighted in the liveliness of his measures. He was undoubtedly the best bard in Glamorgan in the 18th cent, before the time of [Iolo Morganwg](#). It is generally said that he sent to [Edward Evan](#) (1716 - 1798) a letter in which the technique of composing in the free metres was discussed, but it is fairly certain that it was [Iolo](#) who wrote that letter. He was buried at Aberpergwm in 1774.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

T. C. Evans *History of Llangynwyd Parish, with Illustrations* (Llanelly 1887), 186-8

D. Rhys Phillips, *The History of the Vale of Neath* (Swansea 1925), 1925, 546-53

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 1948, 241-3, 290-300

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