

OWAIN ap THOMAS ap RHODRI (' Owain Lawgoch '; died 1378), a soldier of fortune and pretender to the principality of Wales

Name: Owain ap Thomas ap Rhodri

Date of death: 1378

Parent: Cecilia wraig Thomas ap Rhodri

Parent: Thomas ap Rhodri

Gender: Male

Occupation: soldier of fortune and pretender to the principality of Wales

Area of activity: Military; Politics, Government and Political Movements

Author: Thomas Jones Pierce

Son of [Thomas ap Rhodri ap Gruffydd](#) by one Cecilia - he was therefore a great-great-grandson of [Llywelyn ap Iorwerth](#) and a great-nephew of [Llywelyn ap Gruffydd](#). Born c. 1330, probably on [Thomas's](#) estate of Tatsfield in Surrey, he appears to have entered the service of Philip VI of France while still quite young, and except for a brief interval of less than twelve months, spent the remainder of his life abroad, earning for himself, as ' Yevain de Galles ' or Owen of Wales, an outstanding reputation as a mercenary leader, not only in France, but in Lombardy and Brittany, Alsace, and Switzerland.

His visit to England in the summer of 1365 was made in order to claim possession of his paternal inheritance (see [Thomas ap Rhodri](#)); but having secured the estate, he left again for France in March 1366. Late in 1369 (Anglo-French hostilities, suspended since 1360, having been resumed in April 1369), he was deprived of his property in England and Wales for adhering to the king's enemies. At this point in his career Owain became involved in the political side of Anglo-French relations. Though himself a stranger to Wales (his father and grandfather had been long resident in England) he was very conscious of his hereditary claims as lineal successor of the two Llywelyns, as Froissart makes clear, and seems to have spoken much about them in French court circles. Owain's pretensions were now exploited by French interests, and plans were laid for diverting English attention by an invasion of Wales under Owain's leadership. The expedition of 1372, preceded by a notable proclamation setting out Owain's claims, got no further than Guernsey, where his exploits recorded in popular song and legend remained long in memory. The English authorities were prepared for an invasion of Wales as early as December 1369; it is, moreover, significant that in the following year an inhabitant of Anglesey was condemned for having been in touch with ' Owen Lawgoch,' an enemy and traitor, for the purpose of starting a war in Wales. The reference in this context to ' Owen Lawgoch,' considered alongside the later vaticinary poetry linked with a hero of that name (in one poem ' Lawgoch ' is actually identified with Owain ap Thomas ap Rhodri) shows that Owain's fame after his death left a deep impression on Wales.

That he was considered a serious menace in England is suggested by the circumstances of his assassination at the siege of Mortagne-sur-Mer (obviously with the connivance of the English authorities), in July 1378, at the hands of a Scot, John Lamb, who had wormed himself into Owain's confidence. He was buried four miles away from the scene of his death, in the church of S. Leger, deeply mourned by a wide circle of associates, the deeds of this proud and generous, albeit passionate, personality, commanding the admiration of some of the leading chroniclers of the age.

Author

Professor Thomas Jones Pierce, (1905 - 1964)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1899-1900 and 1900-01

Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, IV, iii, 1928. A full bibliography of continental sources will be found in the works quoted

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Owain Lawgoch](#)

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