

OWAIN CYFEILIOG (c. 1130 - 1197), prince and poet

Name: Owain Cyfeiliog
Date of birth: c. 1130
Date of death: 1197
Spouse: Gwenllian ferch Owain Gwynedd
Child: Cadwallon
Child: Gwenwynwyn
Parent: Gruffudd ap Maredudd
Gender: Male
Occupation: prince and poet
Area of activity: Military; Poetry; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Royalty and Society
Author: David Myrddin Lloyd

Son of Gruffudd, brother of [Madog ap Maredudd](#), prince of Powys. In 1149 [Madog](#) appointed him under-lord of Cyfeiliog. About 1153 [Rhys ap Gruffydd](#) attacked this commote, and although Owain was later to marry his daughter, they remained enemies for years. After the death of [Madog](#) in 1160, Owain held Cyfeiliog on his own account, and in 1163 he joined, with [Owain Fychan](#), to capture and destroy the royal castle of Carreghofa. In 1165 he is found with other princes of Powys and the other Welsh provinces in the great muster under [Owain Gwynedd](#) facing Henry II's attack in the Berwyn district. The next year, however, he again joined with [Owain Fychan](#) to drive Iorwerth Goch from Mochnant, which they divided between them by a line which still remains as the border of Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire. In 1167 he reverted to [Madog ap Maredudd](#)'s policy of friendship with England, and remained fairly constant to it for the remainder of his life. In 1167 he was attacked by [Owain Gwynedd](#) and [Rhys ap Gruffydd](#) of South Wales who seized the commote of Caereinion and gave it to [Owain Fychan](#), but Owain Cyfeiliog soon regained it with English aid.

In 1170 he established the Cistercian monastery of Strata Marcella. He again supported the English in 1173, and was present at the Council of Oxford in 1177. He was the only Welsh prince who refused to support the efforts of archbishop Baldwin and [Giraldus Cambrensis](#) in 1188 to preach the Crusade, for which he was excommunicated. It would appear that he handed over the reins of government to his son, [Gwenwynwyn](#), in 1195, and retired to the monastery of Strata Marcella, where he died in 1197, and where he lies buried. His first wife was Gwenllian, daughter of [Owain Gwynedd](#) (mother of [Gwenwynwyn](#)), and his second wife was a daughter of [Rhys ap Gruffydd](#).

In the early years of his reign he excelled as a warrior, and it is as such that [Cynddelw](#) sings his praises, but at a later date, [Gerald](#) is to speak of him as one of the three princes in Wales who were conspicuous 'for the justice, wisdom, and moderation of their rule.' The latter also mentions his eloquent tongue and his sagacity. Yet his fame as a fighter remained, even among the Normans, as can be seen from the 'Legende de Fulk Fitz Warin.' It is this aspect of his career that the prince himself reveals in his 'Drinking-horn of Owain' - a poem patterned on the 'Gododdin,' in which a number of fellow-soldiers are each addressed in turn as the horn goes round. It is the best portrayal which we have of the campaigning life of a Welsh prince, with the close comradeship existing between him and his chosen war-band, and the thrill of their life of high adventure. There is also extant (in [The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales](#)^[?], 192 and *R.B.H. Poetry*, 1395-6) a series of *englynion* sung by the war-band of Owain to their 'circuit' of Wales. The circuit, however, is of North Wales only.

Author

David Myrddin Lloyd, (1909 - 1981)

Sources

Brut y Tywysogion

J. E. Lloyd, [A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest \(London 1911\)](#), Vol. I

J. E. Lloyd, [A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest \(London 1911\)](#), Vol. II

P. Barbier, *The Age of Owain Gwynedd an attempt at a connected account of the history of Wales from December, 1135, to November, 1170* (London 1908)

Giraldi Cambrensis Opera (1861-91)

Collections Historical and Archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire, iv (1871)

Llawysgrif Hendregadredd (1933)

[The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales \(1801-1807\)](#), i, 265-268

'*Llyfr Coch Hergest*' (*Jesus College MS. cxi*); (text and translation by T. Gwynn Jones in *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxii)

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Wynnstay Estate Records: Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell: Confirmation by King John, 1200, April 11](#)

NLW Archives: [Wynnstay Estate Records: Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell: Inspeximus and confirmation by Edward de Cherleton, lord of Powys, 1420, August 1](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Owain Cyfeiliog](#)

Additional Links

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