

PHYLIP family of Ardudwy, poets

A family of Welsh poets who lived in Ardudwy, Meirionnydd, in the 16th and 17th cents.. Their period ranges from c. 1543, in which year Siôn Phylip was probably born, to 1678, when probate was granted of the will of Phylip Siôn Phylip, one of his sons. The royalist poet, William Phylip, is usually accounted of the group. The two brothers, Siôn and Rhisiart, and Siôn's two sons, Gruffydd and Phylip Siôn, wrote mainly in the strict metres. There is abundant evidence that Siôn, Rhisiart, and Gruffydd were professional bards, who paid visit after visit to houses of note, mainly in North Wales, receiving hospitality and payment for their poems. Phylip Siôn Phylip, however, does not appear to have written to any but his immediate neighbours; there is no evidence that he was a clerwr. William Phylip, who wrote more in the free metres than in cynganedd, was a gwr bonheddig tiriawg (landed gentleman), who wrote as and when inspired. Siôn wrote several poems to members of the **Vaughan family of Corsygedol**, as did his son Gruffydd a generation later, whilst Rhisiart was bardd teulu (household poet) to the **Vaughan family of Nannau**. But not one of the three confined the range of his 'family' poems to these Merioneth families. Gruffydd, for example, wrote much in praise of the **Ellis family of Ystumlyn** and Bron-y-foel, Caernarfonshire, whilst there is hardly a county family of note in north-west Wales, Montgomeryshire, and Denbighshire, to some member of which they did not sing at some time or other. Siôn, Rhisiart, and Gruffydd had been through the established course of training for bards of the time, each had had his bardic teacher, and Siôn had graduated at the second Caerwys eisteddfod, 1568. Moreover, they were trained in other than bardic lore in the usual sense; they were, for example, experts in genealogy. They were, in short, among the last of the professional bards; the person who wrote elegiac englynion on the death of Gruffydd Phylip (1666) describes him as 'the last of the old bards.'

SIÔN PHYLIP (1543? - 1620)

He lived in the farmhouse of Mochres, a few miles from Harlech. His family was descended from an ancestor named Palgus, who left as sole heir a daughter Catherine, who married Ieuan le Colier; from this union, seven generations later, came the poet Siôn Phylip. (See **Lewys Dwnn**, *Heraldic Visitation of Wales*). Before graduating at Caerwys Siôn was a pupil of **William Llŷn**. He wrote a grammar of Welsh metrics (**Peniarth MS 89** and **NLW MS 3047C**) and was in his turn the poetic teacher of his brother Rhisiart, and probably also of his sons, Gruffydd and Phylip Siôn. Siôn Phylip wrote nearly 200 cywyddau and awdlau and numerous englynion. The cywyddau and awdlau may be roughly classified as follows: elegies (marwnadau) 66; eulogies (moliant) 44; love (serch) 26; requests, etc. (gofyn, diolch, etc.) 24; religious or didactic (duwiol) 19; bardic controversies (ymrysonau) 10; miscellaneous (amrywiol) 5; and marriage (priodas) 1. Of the elegies, some are on brother poets (e.g. **William Llŷn**, **Siôn Tudur**, **Simwnt Fychan**, **Morys Dwyfech**); two to royalty (queen Elizabeth and prince Henry, son of James I); some to prominent churchmen: **Richard Vaughan**, bishop of London, **Nicholas Robinson**, bishop of Bangor, **Dr. Gwynn** (a member of the **Gwydir** family), and **Dr. William Griffith**; there is also one on the death of **Katheryn of Berain**. The remainder are to members of well-known Welsh county families. Siôn Phylip well knew how to eulogise his patrons, among whom were **Dr. John Davies of Mallwyd**, **Theodore Price**, principal of Hart Hall, Oxford, **Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni**, **Sir John Wynn of Gwydir** and his eldest son John Wynn, **Simwnt Thelwall of Plas y Ward**, the **Vaughans of Corsygedol**, **Sir William Maurice of Clenennau**, etc. He wrote one cywydd priodas. The occasion was the marriage of **Sir Roger Mostyn** to Mary, daughter of **Sir John Wynn of Gwydir**. Of the love poems, the best known is the cywydd to the sea-gull. Siôn Phylip wrote his share of poems of a religious or didactic character; they are of more value to the historian of religion than as literature. Like **Edmund Prys**, **William Myddelton**, **Siôn Tudur**, **Edward Kyffin**, and **James Parry**, all of whom essayed a Welsh metrical version of some of the Psalms, Siôn Phylip wrote a paraphrase of the first psalm. The religious and didactic group contains some interesting poems. One of them, *Cywydd y ffenics*, appears very often in the manuscripts. Perhaps the most interesting of the miscellaneous poems are the cywyddau ymryson - poems written in bardic controversies, with his own brother, Rhisiart Phylip, for precedence at **Nannau** - with his uncle, **Siôn Dafydd Siencyn**, with **Edmund Prys**, with **Thomas Prys of Plas Iolyn**, and, most interesting of all, with **Siôn Tudur** of S. Asaph. Siôn Phylip was also associated with three other ymrysonau, viz., the two which **Edmund Prys** had with **William Cynwal** and **Huw Machno** respectively, and the one between **Griffith Hafren**, **Rhisiart Phylip**, and **Ieuan Tew**. Siôn Phylip wrote also a very large number of englynion. He wrote nothing at all in the freer metre of the carol which was to become more fashionable in the 17th century in the hands of William Phylip, Gruffydd Phylip, and others. The bard met his death by drowning at Pwllheli, 13 February 1620, when crossing to Mochres on the way back from a bardic tour of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire. He left a widow and six children. His death was mourned by **Edmund Prys**, **Richard Cynwal**, **Ieuan Llwyd**, **Gruffydd Hafren**, **Rowland Fychan**, and by his own son, **Gruffydd Phylip**. He was buried close by his home in the parish church of Llandanwg.

RHISIART PHYLIP (died 1641)

Siôn Phylip's younger brother, was writing as early as 1587. He confined himself to cynganedd, being responsible for 105 cywyddau and awdlau, and over fifty englynion. Like his brother he was a professional bard, and wrote to many North Wales families, composing poems in many instances to the same persons as Siôn. He had two or three controversies with other bards, notably with his brother Siôn, and with **Rhisiart Cynwal**. He does not appear to have written an elegy on his brother, who died in 1620; and it is rather singular that when he himself died in 1641, it was not his nephew, Gruffydd Phylip, who wrote his elegy, but William Phylip of Hendre Vechan. He lived at Llanuwchllyn just before his death, for William Phylip says that he died at Prys and was buried at Llanuwchllyn. The following is an analysis of his poems: elegies, 32; eulogies, 33; requests and thanks, 13; love, 5; bardic controversies, 11; '**Nannau**,' 7; miscellaneous, 7. The thirty-two elegies are mostly to members of North Wales families, but there is one to Dafydd Llwyd ab Ifan of Aber Maed (Abermâd), Cardiganshire. A little-known cywydd bemoans the death of **Katheryn of Berain**, and one elegy was composed when queen Elizabeth died. The cywyddau and awdlau moliant are like those of other bards, full of genealogical details and of eulogy. Among the families eulogized are those of **Gwydir**, **Corsygedol**, **Lleweni**, **Glynllifon**, **Rhiwedog**, and **Clenennau**. There are four cywyddau eulogising **Dr. John Davies of Mallwyd**. Rhisiart Phylip wrote over a dozen cywyddau gofyn or diolch. 'Cywydd i ofyn newid milgwn' is addressed to **Rowland Vaughan of Caer-gai**; in another poem **John Vaughan of Caer-gai** is asked to give a hound to **Lewis Gwynn of Dolau Gwyn**. Rhisiart wrote five short poems, the best-known being 'Awdl o foliant i ferch o Dywyn.' Besides his controversy with his brother Siôn about **Nannau**, Rhisiart Phylip had an ymryson with **Rhisiart Cynwal**. He was also one of the bards who wrote replies to the 'cywydd yr Eryr' sent by **Thomas Prys**, Plas Iolyn=, to ask their advice. Another ymryson of a kind was that in which he, his brother Siôn, **Gruffydd Hafren**, and **Ieuan Tew** were associated. He had a bardic controversy with **Siôn Mawddwy** also. In the miscellaneous group are some interesting cywyddau and awdlau, among them two to a 'ffïol frech' or 'ffïol oddfyn,' a drinking vessel which belonged to **Lewis Gwyn** of Dolau Gwyn, Merioneth. Though it is generally believed that Rhisiart Phylip wrote nothing in free metres, Dafydd Evans of Llanrwt had in one of his manuscripts 'dau Bennill ar y Mesur Gwel yr Adeilad' which he says are by Rhisiart Phylip. Rhisiart wrote numerous englynion also.

GRUFFYDD PHYLIP (died 1666)

The poems of Gruffydd Phylip are as follows: I (a) elegies 26, (b) eulogies 25, (c) requests 4, (d) marriage 6, (e) miscellaneous 2; II, poems in free metre 3; III, englynion. Of the elegies the best known are those on the death of **Siôn Phylip**, and of **Richard Hughes** of Cefn Llanfair, Llŷn. Not so well-known, but interesting because of its subject, is the elegy on **John Williams**, archbishop of York. Gruffydd also wrote elegies on the death of his patrons, **William Vaughan of Corsygedol**, and **Owen Ellis**, **Ystumlyn**. More than half of the eulogies are in praise of **William Vaughan of Corsygedol**, but there are others of equal interest. Such, for example, are two composed to **Dr. John Davies of Mallwyd**. The only cywydd merch by Gruffydd Phylip is that entitled (in **Peniarth MS 241**) 'Cywydd Marwnad a wnaeth [un] o ymddyddan rhwngtho ai gariad y rhon a fase farw. ...' Among Gruffydd's poems is a group of seventeen written to **William Vaughan**, **Corsygedol**, who married Ann Nannau in 1649, and to other members of the **Corsygedol** family. Gruffydd Phylip wrote several poems to members of the family of **Ellis of Ystumlyn** and **Bron-y-foel**, **Eifionydd**, particularly to **Owain Elis** and to **Marged Elis**. Perhaps the most interesting of the **Ystumlyn** poems is the one in ballad form contained in Cardiff MS. 37 (see J. H. Davies, *Caniadau yn y Mesurau Rhyddion*), and called 'Hiraeth y Bardd am Ystumlyn.' Another of his poems in the same metre is printed in *Blodeugerdd*, 1759, entitled 'Dirifau'r Coler du.'

A 'Can Gwirod neu Wyl Fair' (in **Peniarth MS 245**) is also attributed to him. Gruffydd wrote many englynion, including 'Englynion pan oeddynt yn bwrw Castell Harlech i lawr,' six prefaced to **Rowland Vaughan's** translation of **Lewis Bayly's Practice of Piety** and another set of six printed at the beginning of *Ystriaethau Drexilius ar Dragwyddoldeb*, 1661. Gruffydd Phylip died in 1666.

PHYLIP SION PHYLIP (died c. 1677)

The son of Siôn Phylip and brother to Gruffydd Phylip. His will, rh preserved in the National Library of Wales, was made on 9 September 1676, and probate granted 5 July 1678. In it he is described as 'Phillip Jon. Phillip of the p.ish of Llandanock in the county of Merioneth.'

Compared with the other Phylipiaid he was not a prolific writer, only four cywyddau by him being extant as far as is known. They are: (a) 'Cowydd i Mr. Gruffydd Van o Gors y Geidol yw groesawu Adref or ysgol'; (b) 'Marwnad Mr. Moris Wynn o Faesneuadd Esquier Enwog'; (c) 'Cowydd Moliant i Owen Wynn o'r Glyn, Esq., pan oedd ef yn Sirif yn Sir Feirionnydd'; and (d) 'Marwnad William Phylip Hendre fechan.'

WILLIAM PHYLIP (1579/80? - 1669/70)

The son of Phylip ap Siôn ap Thomas ap Robert of Hendre Fechan, in the parish of Llanddwywe, Meirionnydd, who died 25 February 1625/6, and was buried at Llanddwywe.

William's mother, Catrin, died in 1651, and was also buried at Llanddwywe. His wife, Ann, died in 1653, and his daughter Elizabeth, about the same time. Wife and daughter were buried at Llanaber, but William, who died 11 February 1669/70, was buried at Llanddwywe. William wrote elegies on the death of his father, mother, wife, and daughter. He left a son, Henry Williams of Hendre Fechan, who in 1678, presented [NLW MS 3047C](#), which is in the autograph of his father, to [Griffith Vaughan of Corsygedol](#). As many of his poems show, William was a staunch Royalist, and it is said that he suffered persecution in the Cromwellian period because of his elegy on Charles I and his hatred of the new politico-religious sects. To what extent he suffered persecution it is difficult to say. The 'Englynion ffarwel i Hendre Fechan' will be better understood if taken to refer to his approaching death. William Phylip wrote twenty cywyddau, one awdl, and about thirty-five poems in the carol and 'dyri' metres; in addition he wrote a very large number of englynion. Of the cywyddau the best-known are the elegy on Charles I and his 'Cywydd y Bedd.' Most of his cywyddau are elegies. He composed elegies on the deaths of his father, his mother, his wife and daughter, Richard Philip, Robert Ffoulke, incumbent of Llanfechain, [Huw Nannau](#), and [Griffith Vaughan of Caergai](#). Of the 'miscellaneous' poems some three or four are political, e.g. one on the coming of Charles II in 1660, and another in praise of [Sir John Owen](#) of Clenennau. [Thomas Jones](#) in *Carolau a Dyriau Duwiol* included four poems by William Phylip, whilst [Dafydd Jones o Drefriw](#) in the first edition (1759) of *Blodeu-Gerdd* prints five, although one of these, 'Carol i'r Gwirod,' is probably not by William Phylip. Besides these, there are twenty-four poems mainly of a similar nature which are attributed to William Phylip and a few others of doubtful authorship. Some are religious, whilst others are political, e.g., 'Histori y Bruttaniaid.' A 'Carol at Gruffydd Phylip am Gatea o waith William Phylip' is found in [Peniarth MS 115](#). There are several examples of carolau and dyriau in English in Bangor MS. 401, most of them in the hand-writing of William.

Of the carolau one of the most interesting types is that called 'Karol Wyl Fair wrth Wirola.' One of these, beginning 'Dyma wirod Mair yn dyfod,' is attributed in *Blodeu-Gerdd*, 1759, to William Phylip, where it is called 'Carol i'r Gwirod, ar Don Deuar.' The manuscripts, however, do not agree in attributing this particular example to him, but there is probably no doubt that one in Bangor MS. 401 in his autograph entitled 'Karol Wyl Fair wrth wirola ar fesur byrr' is by him. Examples of the many englynion by William Phylip are (a) the series relating to the siege and fall of Harlech castle; (b) four 'Englynion marwnad Coronel Wil: Wyn o Ddyffryn Melai,' who was killed in 1643; (c) 'Englynion o gwyn pan fu Rowlant Fychan Caergai yn y Rhyfel,' and three others relating to the fate of [Caergai](#) and [Ynys-maengwyn](#); (d) five 'Englynion Croeso i Arglwydd Mowddwy'; (e) 'Pan dorwyd pen y brenin'; and (f) 'Englynion i'r Rowndied. ...' There are several englynion written to women; englynion of a religious or didactic character are also exceedingly numerous; sixteen englynion 'Y Llyfr at y darleydd' are printed at the beginning of *Ystyriaethau Drexelius*, 1661. 'Englynion ffarwel i hendre fechan' are in some manuscripts called 'Englynion ar henaint.' In B.M. Add. MS. 1493 is contained a Welsh grammar and prosody by William Phylip, much of it in his autograph.

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Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

Sources

W. Ll. Davies, 'Phylipiaid Arduwly; A Survey and a Summary' in *Y Cymmrodor*, xlii, 155-268, and the references cited therein

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