

PRYS, EDMWND (1544 - 1623), archdeacon of Merioneth, and poet

Name: Edmwnd Prys
Date of birth: 1544
Date of death: 1623
Spouse: Gwen ferch Morgan ap Lewis
Spouse: Elin ferch John ap Lewis
Child: Jane Prys
Child: Edmund Price
Child: Morgan Prys
Child: Ffoulk Prys
Child: Robert Prys
Child: John Prys
Gender: Male
Occupation: archdeacon of Merioneth, and poet
Area of activity: Poetry; Religion
Authors: John Wyn Roberts, William Llewelyn Davies

Born in 1544 but there is no certainty as to the place of his birth although it was possibly Y Gyddros, in the parish of Llanfor, Meirionnydd. He received his early education at S. Asaph cathedral school, from which he went in 1565 to S. John's College, Cambridge. He was ordained deacon 23 March 1567 at Conington church, Kent. He graduated B.A. in 1568 and was ordained priest at Ely the same year. He took his M.A. degree in 1571. The following year he was inducted into the living of Ffestiniog and Maentwrog, but for the time being was non-resident. On 13 March 1576 he became rector of Ludlow, Salop, and on 6 November of the same year was appointed archdeacon of Merioneth. From now on until his death he lived at Tyddyn-du, Maentwrog. On 16 April 1580 he was, in addition, given the living of Llanenddwyn, about eight miles away from Maentwrog in the direction of Barmouth. This was probably the explanation of the tradition that his home was at Gerddi Bluog, Harlech. He was made a canon of St Asaph, 8 October 1602.

Little is known about his life. We hear of him in suits before the Court of Star Chamber, and we know that he assisted [bishop William Morgan](#) in the work of translating the Bible. The tradition that he translated the Psalms is, however, incorrect; what he probably did was to help by reading over and checking the work of [bishop Morgan](#). In 1621 he published his *Salmau Cân*; these were printed in London and published with the *Book of Common Prayer*. He was by no means the first to produce 'metrical psalms.' Sternhold and Hopkins had already done the same thing in England, and others in Wales. His achievement was that his translation of the psalms was in a metre better adapted for setting to music than the previous ones; moreover, his book included a number of tunes: 'the first Welsh book in which music was printed.' The work was republished on very many occasions. He wrote a considerable amount of poetry in the classical metres and some poems in the 'free' form. He exchanged flying poetry with some of his contemporaries, his best known disputation being with [William Cynwal](#). In reality, this was a clash between the representative of the new English university culture (Prys) and the old Welsh bardic learning ([Cynwal](#)). [Cynwal](#) would not for a moment admit that Prys was any kind of a poet. Edmwnd Prys wrote a few *cywyddau* on religious themes - probably propaganda for the new Protestant religion - but his best poetry is found in those *cywyddau* which are based on his observation of life, and more particularly in his *cywydd* 'against the unruliness of the great.' Prys was not a romantic poet but he is entitled to be called a contemplative poet. He died in 1623.

Edmwnd Prys was twice married: (1) to Elin, daughter of John ap Lewis of Pengwern, Ffestiniog, and (2) to Gwen, daughter of Morgan ap Lewis of Pengwern, his first wife's cousin - both being descended from [Dafydd ap Ieuan ap Einion](#), constable of Harlech castle, and, therefore, being of the lineage of [Osborn Wyddel](#). His children by his first wife were JOHN PRYS, ROBERT PRYS (who married Elizabeth, daughter of [Robert ap Edward](#) of Maesyneuadd), and JANE PRYS. His children by his second wife were FFOULK PRYS (below), MORGAN PRYS (below), and EDMUND PRYS (below).

It used to be believed that Edmwnd Prys, the archdeacon, lived at Gerddi Bluog, near Llan-bedr, Meirionnydd, rather than at Tyddyn-du, near Gellilydan. It can now, however, be proved that it was Morgan Prys, Edmwnd's son by his second wife, who went to live at Gerddi Bluog after his marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Robert ap Edward Humphrey of Llanfair. [J. E. Griffith](#) and other writers are in error when they say that Margaret (Williams) was the heiress of Gerddi Bluog and the wife of Morgan Prys; there are in the N.L.W. two sheets of paper (in the Gerddi Bluog and Crafnant collection; see *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes a Chofnodion Sir Feirionnydd*, i, 39-40), dated 20 August 1602, dealing with the marriage of Morgan Prys and Elizabeth. Other papers in the same collection prove that Morgan Prys was succeeded by ROBERT, Robert by MORGAN, Morgan by ROBERT, and Robert by MORGAN. The last of these Morgan s married in 1710 Katherine, daughter of Jane Wynne of Moelyglo, near Harlech, by whom he had a daughter, JANE, who married Griffith Williams of Islaw'rffordd, Llanddwywe, in 1732.

Edmwnd Prys's eldest son by his second wife was Ffoulk (Ffowc) Prys (died 11 January 1624/5), the poet. He was not a cleric and is, therefore, not the Ffoulk Price, B.A., who received the living of Llanllyfni, Caernarfonshire, 21 July 1670. Like his father before him he lived at Tyddyn-du, and it is as Ffowc Price of Tyddyn-du that [Gruffydd Phylip](#) refers to him in the elegy which he wrote for him. He, too, had written an elegy for [Sir John Wynn](#) of Gwydir, and a flying poem to [Rhisiart Phylip](#). His poetry is to be found in [Peniarth MS 119](#) and [Peniarth MS 144](#), and in [NLW MS 263B](#), [NLW MS 719B](#), [NLW MS 1578B](#), [NLW MS 2288B](#), [NLW MS 2691D](#), [NLW MS 2692B](#), [NLW MS 6499B](#), [NLW MS 11087B](#), etc. On 8 May 1632, i.e. about eight years after his death - and it will be noted that he died very shortly after his father - there was an official enquiry ('Inquisitio post mortem') into the extent of his property; in this connection see the article by [A. O. Evans](#) in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1922-3, in which it is shown that his estate included what are now the Ffestiniog slate quarries. It is known that some of this land came into the possession of the Tan-y-bwlch family - see [Evans, Griffith, and Oakley](#) (families) of Tan-y-bwlch, Maentwrog - possibly through the marriage of his eldest daughter, Lowry, who was his heiress, with [Robert Evans](#) of Tan-y-bwlch. By 1632, too, his widow, Elizabeth (daughter of Peter Meyrick of Ucheldre, Gwyddelwern) had married Griffith Lloyd.

An Edmund Price got the living of Llanllyfni, Caernarfonshire, 5 February 1637, and was transferred in June 1639 to the living of Llanfechell, Anglesey (by this time he is

entered in the records of the diocese of Bangor as 'Edmund Price M.A.');

he probably died in 1643, as we find Robert Lloyd succeeding him at Llanfechell in the summer of that year. It is possible that he was the Edmund shown by **J. E. Griffith** as one of the sons of the archdeacon by his second wife, in which case he may be the Edmund Price, 'of Wales,' said by Venn (*Alumni Cantabrigienses*) to have matriculated at Cambridge from Queens' College in the Lent term, 1615/6, graduated 1618/9 (M.A. 1622).

With regard to the EDMUND PRICE who became vicar of Clynnog in May 1692 and who died (according to **J. E. Griffith**) in February 1718 (1719?), Foster (*Index Ecclesiasticus*) says that he was the son of Edw. Price of Llanbedr, Meirionnydd, that he matriculated at the University of Oxford, (as 'pauper'), from Jesus College, 7 April 1682, at the age of 20, that he graduated B.A. in 1685, and took his M.A. (from S. Alban Hall) 'in 1688. It is possible that the Edw. Price, stated by Foster to have been his father, was Edward Prys, son of Morgan Prys of Gerddi Bluog, i.e., the Edward Prys who married Lowry Poole of Cae Nest, Llanbedr.

There is no certainty about the FOULK (FOULCE?) PRICE, B.A., who obtained the living of Llanllyfni, Caernarfonshire, 21 July 1670. Perhaps he was the son of the above-mentioned Edmund Price who obtained the same living in 1637 or, on the other hand, he may have belonged to the same family as the FULKE PRICE who died in 1632. The latter was educated at S. John's College, Cambridge (B.A. 1596/7, M.A. 1600, B.D. 1607, D.D. 1616). He was rector of Cerrig-y-drudion, 1597-1614, prebendary of St Asaph, 1599-1632, rector of Whittington, Salop, 1605-8; vicar of Gresford, 1609-13; rector of Llandrinio, 1613-32; rector of Cwm, Flintshire, 1616-24; and rector of Llan-fechain, Montgomeryshire, 1617-32. **Siôn Cain** wrote an elegy upon this Dr. Price in 1633-see the copy (in the poet's own handwriting) in **Peniarth MS 116**. **Siôn Cain** mentions the names of six of Dr. Price's children (by his two wives) and although there is none called Ffoulk it may be that Fulke Price of Llanllyfni was his grandson. But, perhaps, we should be on safer ground if we assumed him to be the son of the Edmund Price who was given the living in 1637.

Authors

Reverend John Wyn Roberts, (1916 - 1953)

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

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Further Reading

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