

PRYS (PRICE), THOMAS, of Plas Iolyn (1564? - 1634), poet and adventurer

Name: Thomas Prys
Date of birth: 1564?
Date of death: 1634
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet and adventurer
Home: Plas Iolyn
Area of activity: Poetry; Travel and Exploration
Author: William Rowlands

The eldest son of [Elis Prys](#), of Plas Iolyn, Denbighshire. His date of birth is not known, but he was buried at Ysbyty Ifan, 23 August 1634, and according to his poems he had reached old age when he died. He was born at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, and he was engaged in the wars and expeditions of her age. He was twice married (1) to Margaret, daughter of William Griffith of Caernarvon, and (2) to Jane, daughter of [Hugh Gwynn](#) of Berth-ddu and Bodysgallen. He had three children by the first wife, and ten by his second.

After his father's death Thomas Prys held the manor of Ysbyty Ifan, Denbighshire, with the livings held by his father; in 1599 he was sheriff of Denbighshire. He fought in the wars of the Netherlands at the end of the 16th century under Sir Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. He was with the earl also at Tilbury in the army that opposed the Armada in 1588. He fought also in France, Spain, Scotland, and Ireland. He spent much time also as a buccaneer, and at the end of the 16th cent, he bought a ship and went out buccaneering on the Spanish coast; he gives an account of this in a poem: ' Cywydd i ddangos yr hildring a fu i r pan oedd ar y môr. ' Here, he gives, in humorous vein, an account of his expedition to the Spanish coast, and at the end he vows never again to venture on such an expedition: ' Before I will, pill or part, Buy a ship I'll be a shepart.' An account of his sea voyages is given in his poems to [Pirs Griffith](#) of Penrhyn, near Bangor, who was similarly engaged. Some time towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth, Prys went to Bardsey to facilitate his work as a buccaneer; but after his father's death, he resided at Plas Iolyn. He spent much of his time in London, and he gives a vivid description of life in the metropolis in his poems, e.g., ' Cywydd i ddangos mai Uffern yw Llundain.' There he squandered his money in litigation and dissipation.

He was regarded as a poet of renown in his day, and his works are found in B.M. Add. MS. 14872 (probably in his own handwriting); many are found also in the Peniarth, Mostyn, and Cefn Coch manuscripts. He wrote many poems on the traditional subjects of the bards, and he composed many love and nature poems. He composed many poems to ' Eiddig ' (the jealous one); and he had a long bardic contest with [Edmund Prys](#) and other bards 'about Eiddig.' There was also a bardic contest between him and two other bards, namely, his cousin [Rhys Wyn](#) of Giler and [Rhys Cain](#). These have little literary value; but they throw some light on his life and the characteristics of his age. His best poetry is in his elegies. Amongst the best are his elegies on his two sons, Elis and Hanibol Prys; and also that on his old friend [Pirs Griffith](#) of Penrhyn. On his faulty diction and his use of English words and phrases, [Lewis Morris](#) writes: ' his uncorrectness and carelessness in writing must be attributed to his military and wandering life in his younger years.'

According to his will, his eldest son, Thomas, had married without his father's consent, so he was disinherited, and the manor of Ysbyty Ifan was left to Robert, the eldest son by his second wife; the rest of his estate was divided between his remaining three sons by his second wife, viz.: Peter, John, and William.

Author

William Rowlands

Sources

J. E. Griffith, *Pedigrees of Anglesey and Carnarvonshire Families* (1914), 204

N.L.W. thesis (W. Rowlands)

Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru (1870), 857-8

Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig (1889-96) (2nd ed.), viii, 468K

History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher, and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog, iv, 102 et seq.

Thomas Pennant, *A Tour (Tours) in [North] Wales*, iii, 442 et seq.

Cymru (O.M.E.), lvii, 54 et seq.

Further Reading

BBC cymrufyw: [Y môr-ladron Cymreig](#) (accessed August 2019)

Wikipedia Article: [Tomos Prys](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q7820312](#)

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