

TOMAS ap IEUAN ap RHYS (c. 1510 - 1617), writer of cwndidau (short religious songs or carols)

Name: Tomas ap Ieuan ap Rhys
Date of birth: c. 1510
Date of death: 1617
Gender: Male
Occupation: writer of cwndidau (short religious songs or carols)
Area of activity: Poetry; Religion
Author: Griffith John Williams

grandson of [Rhys Brydydd](#) and cousin of [Lewis Morgannwg](#). Although the home of this bardic family was in Tir Iarll and although Rhys Brydydd lived at Llanharan, yet it is said in Llanover MS. E4 (written c. 1613-4) that Tomas ab Ieuan ap Rhys lived at Llandudwg (Tythegston). Nevertheless, he and his family were closely connected with Llangynwyd. Little is known of his life. He says in one of his *cwndidau* that he was imprisoned in the town of Kenffig; in another he says that his wife sent him to gather seed-corn in the Vale of Glamorgan. He sang before the monasteries were dissolved - he has a poem in praise of the abbey at Margam. It is sometimes thought that he was alive in 1584 but there is no poem by him which can be proved to have been written after 1560. Although he belonged to a family of well-known *penceirddiaid* he had not mastered the old bardic lore, as is evidenced by his poem to the Rood at Llangynwyd. On the contrary he chose to adopt the measures used by the wandering bards; he followed their style and, in consequence, his work is full of those errors which were condemned by the *penceirddiaid*. Nevertheless, he was a professional bard, and he used those measures not only when writing religious poems but also when he praised the landed gentry and when composing elegies. He also wrote *daroganau* (prophetic poems) and thus was of some repute in Glamorgan as a prophet. It was probably this tradition which induced [Iolo Morgannwg](#) to concoct so many strange tales concerning him. These fictions were repeated in books of the 19th century. His elegy was written by his friend Hopcyn Tomas Phylip. The bulk of his work was printed in *Hen Gwndidau* (1910).

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

Hopkin-James and T. C. Evans, *Hen Gwndidau, Carolau, a Chwyddau* (Bangor 1910), ix-liv, 1-51, 282-3

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 1948, 110-43

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Published date: 1959

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