

## YORKE, PHILIP (1743 - 1804), of Erddig (or Erthig), Wrexham, antiquary ▾

**Name:** Philip Yorke  
**Date of birth:** 1743  
**Date of death:** 1804  
**Spouse:** Diana Yorke (née Wyn)  
**Parent:** Simon Yorke  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** antiquary  
**Home:** Erddig Erthig  
**Area of activity:** History and Culture  
**Author:** Arthur Herbert Dodd

The eldest son of Simon Yorke (died 1767), grandson of Simon Yorke of Dover, wholesale grocer, and first cousin of lord-chancellor Hardwicke. He was born 29 July 1743, at Erthig, inherited by Simon (1732) from his uncle, John Meller, who had bought the property in 1718 after the bankruptcy of **Josua Edisbury**. He was Hardwicke's godson, and after attending preparatory schools near London from 1758-9, he spent three terms at Eton (1759-60), followed, after a year at home, by two years at Benet College (now Corpus Christi), Cambridge (from 10 April 1762), and finishing at Lincoln's Inn (1764). He graduated M.A. 'per literas regias' in 1765, and came down with a strong taste for the classics (especially Virgil) and a bent for antiquities recognised by his election to the Society of Antiquaries in 1768, but with little relish for the fashionable amusements of his day. On succeeding to the estate the preceding year he showed himself an enlightened landlord, using his income of £7,000 a year in embellishment of hall and grounds, purchase of adjoining properties, mineral development, and scientific farming. He played his part in social life and local government (especially the militia) and sat twice in Parliament for English pocket boroughs; but with his completely English antecedents, education, and first marriage, he took little interest in the land of his birth till, in 1782, he married Diana, daughter of Piers Wynn of Dyffryn Aled, and widow of R. O. Meyrick. Starting with 'no great respect for the mountain Welsh, great or small' (says **Apperley**), and preferring his wife 'when the Welshwoman is not predominant' (Cust, *Chronicles*, ii, 251, 261), he developed an antiquarian interest in her descent from Marchudd, lord of Uwchdulas, and by 1795 had come to 'think the race of Cadwallon more glorious than the breed of Gimcrack'; in that year **Richard Marsh** of Wrexham printed for him, with dedication to **Thomas Pennant**, *Tracts of Powys*, based on the few printed sources available and on correspondence with **Gwallter Mechain** (Walter Davies, 1761 - 1849), and other scholars, and including an account of the descendants of **Bleddyn ap Cynfyn**, a refutation of Polydore Virgil's strictures on the ancient Britons, some notes on crown lordships in Powys, and some letters of **Goronwy Owen** and **Lewis Morris**. This was expanded four years later into his classic *Royal Tribes of Wales*, printed by **John Painter** of Wrexham. His heraldic interests found expression also in the embellishment of his entrance hall with the arms of the chief North Wales families, but his project of following up the *Royal Tribes* with the work on the Fifteen Common Tribes was frustrated by his death on 19 March 1804. He was buried at Marchwiel. **Apperley** describes him as 'the worst horseman I ever saw in a saddle,' and 'one of the worst-dressed men in the country,' but unequalled as companion, conversationalist, and raconteur; he also had some success as an amateur actor at the Wynnstay theatre. The present Yorkes of Erthig and Wynn-Yorkes of Dyffryn Aled descend from his two marriages.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd**, (1891 - 1975)

### Sources

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

A. L. Cust, *Chronicles of Erthig on the Dyke* (London 1914)

A. N. Palmer, *History of the thirteen country townships of the old parish of Wrexham, and of the townships of Burras Riffri, Erlas, & Erddig Being the fifth and last part of "A history of the town and parish of Wrexham"* (1903), 236-42

J. E. Griffith, *Pedigrees of Anglesey and Carnarvonshire Families* (1914), 167, 327

'Nimrod' (C. J. Apperley), *My Life and Times* (1927)

Thomas Pennant, *A Tour (Tours) in [North] Wales* (1883 ed.), i, 374-5

Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales* (1887 ed.), biographical introduction by R. Williams

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Philip Yorke](#)

### Works

Philip Yorke, *Crude-ditties* (Wrexham 1795)

### Additional Links

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