

WESTMINSTER ABBEY



UNVEILING AND DEDICATION

OF A MEMORIAL TO

DYLAN THOMAS

27 October 1914 — 9 November 1953

Monday 1 March 1982

3.45 p.m.

DYLAN THOMAS was born in Swansea, South Wales, on October 27, 1914, the son of the senior English master at the town's Grammar School. Although encouraged to read the standard authors in his father's library, and to write, the boy found a warmer domestic atmosphere in the home of his school-friend Daniel Jones. There he revelled in a tradition of family music-making and word-games. More than two hundred school-days poems, in which the two friends wrote alternating lines, are extant; and his friendship with Jones was crucial to the cast of Thomas's creative life. In his years as a pupil at Swansea Grammar School he showed no interest in any subject except English. The notebooks he filled with drafts of poems in the years between 1930 and 1934 later served as a quarry out of which he took youthful work and refashioned it.

After a short period as a reporter on a local newspaper Thomas went to London to share the studio of Alfred Janes, the painter, who was one of the group of friends and artists (it also included Daniel Jones, by now a mature composer, and Vernon Watkins, poet) whose gifts had developed in their common home town.

Thomas's first volumes, in 1934 and 1936, despite their general obscurity, received high praise, mainly for the musicality of the language. Some found in them kinships with Webster and Donne. Thomas was committed to the craft of letters, although most of his income was to be earned as a broadcaster, generally of original talks—very often humorous and nostalgic—and as sometime actor, and reader of others' poetry.

In 1936 he met, in the company of Augustus John, Caitlin Macnamara to whom he was married the following year. They were to live in a succession of brief homes mainly in London, Oxfordshire and Laugharne, in Carmarthenshire—and to have two sons and a daughter—until in the spring of 1949 they settled in The Boat House, Laugharne. The house, bought for them by a friend, overlooked the Towy Estuary and its setting provided Thomas with many of the images of his 'heron-priested shore' which he had celebrated in his *Deaths and Entrances* (1946). The poems in this, the key volume in Thomas's *oeuvre*, revealed him as obsessed with the theme of the loss of childhood happiness and innocence. Critics pointed out the concerns he shared with the 17th century metaphysical poets, particularly Thomas Traherne.

Laugharne also gave Thomas the main back-cloth for *Under Milk Wood*, his play for voices commissioned by the BBC radio features department—a lively and inspired section of the Corporation—at a time when the poets Louis MacNeice, W. R. Rodgers, William Empson, Roy Campbell, Henry Reed and others (all Thomas's friends) were either on its staff or on contract to it. In *Under Milk Wood*, first produced in Britain after his death, Thomas allowed full rein not only to his delight in the sounds of language but also to his love of laughter and his capacity to evoke it.

He made four visits to America to give readings, encouraged on the last two by the reception accorded his *Collected Poems* (1952). Hailed as one of the greatest living lyric poets, he was invited by Stravinsky to collaborate on a work. But on November 9, 1953 he died in a New York hospital, having fallen into a coma. Undoubtedly his death had been hastened by heavy drinking.

His body was taken back to Wales and was buried in the churchyard of St. Martin's Laugharne.

Music before the Service, played by Christopher Herrick, Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey

Toccata and Fugue in D minor *Bach*

Hymn tune Prelude "Rhosymedre" *Vaughan Williams*

The Anthem is sung by The Dylan Singers conducted by Hefin Owen.

DYLAN THOMAS

27 OCTOBER · 1914
9 NOVEMBER · 1953

*Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea*

Buried at Laugharne

The Dylan Thomas memorial is of conifer green Penrhyn stone. The inscription, with letters in white, has been carved by the sculptor Jonah Jones of Penrhyndeudraeth, Gwynedd.

ORDER OF SERVICE

At 3.45 the Members of the Collegiate Body, preceded by representative clergy, take their places in the Sacrarium.

All sit while there is played on the Organ

Prelude: Refusal to Mourn by *Daniel Jones*

(commissioned in 1972 by the Swansea Dylan Thomas Society to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the poet's death)

All remain seated for the

WELCOME

by the Dean of Westminster

The Congregation remains seated for the Lesson read from the Lectern by the Reverend Alan Luff, Precentor and Sacrist of Westminster Abbey.

REVELATION 10, 1—4 and 8—11

The bitter-sweet calling of one who is to see strange visions and to write them down for his people.

I SAW another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

All remain seated for

THE ADDRESS

given by Mr. R. D. Smith

All stand to sing the Hymn, during which the Procession moves to Poets' Corner

HYMN 372 A.M.R.

IMMORTAL, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

*St. Denio (Joanna)
Welsh Hymn Melody*

*W. Chalmers Smith
(1884-1908)*

A member of the family says

MAY I ask you, Mr. Dean, to receive into the safe custody of the Dean and Chapter, here in Poets' Corner, this Memorial Stone in honour of Dylan Thomas.

and then unveils the Memorial.

The Dedication

The Dean says

TO the greater glory of God, and in memory of Dylan Thomas, we dedicate this Memorial in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Let us pray

O GOD who through the ages dost inspire men to explore the richness and diversity of our human nature, we give thanks for the high skill of Dylan Thomas, who from out of his sensitivity of spirit and through a rare use of language, laid bare his soul, speaking to his contemporaries in imperishable verse: through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Three grandchildren of Dylan Thomas lay a wreath on the Memorial Stone.

The Procession returns to the Sacrament during the singing of the second part of the Hymn

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render: O help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

All kneel for the Prayers led by the Precentor.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; in earth as it is
in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For
thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and
ever. Amen.

Let us enter into silence as we remember before God with
thanksgiving Dylan Thomas.

O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee, without
whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and
multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and
guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally
lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O heavenly Father,
For Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray for the writers of today.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast proclaimed thine eternal truth by the voice of prophets and evangelists, direct and bless, we beseech thee, those who in this our generation speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of the people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous, to the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer for St. David's Day

ALMIGHTY God, who in love towards thy people didst call Saint David to be a faithful and wise steward of thy mysteries: Mercifully grant that, following his purity of life and zeal for the whole Gospel of Christ, we may with him receive thy heavenly reward; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

All sit

Mr. John Ormond reads

Poem in October

A corporate Acts of Recollection is made as the Choir sings the Anthem

MY soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars.
Where stands a winged sentry
All skilful in the wars:
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet peace sits crown'd with smiles,
And one born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious friend,
And (O my soul, awake!)
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes—
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

Daniel Jones (b. 1912)

Henry Vaughan (1622-95)

Mr. Leslie Norris reads

Fern Hill

After a short silence all stand to sing

HYMN 367 A.M.R. (second tune)

KING of glory, King of peace,
I will love thee;
And, that love may never cease,
I will move thee.
Thou hast granted my request,
Thou hast heard me;
Thou didst note my working breast,
Thou hast spared me. Alleluia!
Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing thee,
And the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee.
Though my sins against me cried,
Thou didst clear me,
And alone, when they replied,
Thou didst hear me. Alleluia!
Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise thee;
In my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort
To enrol thee:
E'en eternity's too short
To extol thee. Alleluia!

Gwalchmai

J. D. Jones (1827-70)

George Herbert (1593-1632)

All kneel for The Reverend Trevor Beeson, Canon in Residence, to say

BRING us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitations of thy Majesty and thy glory, world without end. *Amen.*

John Donne

The Dean gives

THE BLESSING

Music after the Service

Toccata giocosa *Mathias*

Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in their seats until directed to move by the Stewards, when they are invited to file past the Memorial and leave by the Poets' Corner Door.