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Rhun Hir [Rhun *ap* Maelgwn Gwynedd]

(fl. 547–c. 600)

David E. Thornton

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Rhun Hir [Rhun *ap* Maelgwn Gwynedd] (fl. 547–c. 600), king of Gwynedd, was son of Maelgwn Gwynedd and, according to later genealogies, of Gwallwen, or Gwalltwn, ferch Afallach. Rhun was probably king of Gwynedd in north-west Wales in the second half of the sixth century. He possibly succeeded to the kingship in 547 if that is the correct date for the death of his father Maelgwn Gwynedd. The date of the end of his reign is not known, though his son and probable successor, Beli, died in 627. Most of the information about Rhun is of a late and unreliable character so that, from a historical perspective, his life and rule remain obscure. For example, the late text *Breiniau gwŷr Arfon* ('rights of the men of Arfon') (c.1200) relates that Rhun had to contest claims by north Britons before succeeding his father. He is credited with great height in some later medieval notices, hence his cognomen 'the Tall'. The earliest royal genealogies of Gwynedd would trace the main dynasty of Gwynedd to Maelgwn through Rhun, but later accounts, following Geoffrey of Monmouth, claim rather that the line of descent was through his (alleged) brother Einion and relegate Rhun to the role of fathering a daughter married to a Breton duke. Some late vernacular texts state that his mother Gwallwen was Maelgwn's mistress and that Rhun was therefore illegitimate; this is probably an attempt to explain the discrepancy between the genealogies and Geoffrey's version of events. Rhun's wife is called Perweur ferch Rhun Rhyfeddfawr in late genealogies.

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