

ABRAHAM, WILLIAM (Mabon; 1842-1922), M.P. and first president of the South Wales Miners' Federation

Name: William Abraham
Pseudonym: Mabon
Date of birth: 1842
Date of death: 1922
Spouse: Sarah Abraham (née Williams)
Parent: Mary Abraham
Parent: Thomas Abraham
Gender: Male
Occupation: M.P. and first president of the South Wales Miners' Federation
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Huw Morris-Jones

Born 14 June 1842, at Cwmafan, fourth son of Thomas and Mary Abraham, he was educated at Cwmafan National School, became a tinplater and then a miner, commencing as a 'door boy.' In 1870 he was elected a miners' agent and played a prominent part in the struggle which led to the agreement for drawing up a sliding scale of wages in the coalfields in relation to prices and profits in December 1875. He was the miners' chairman of the Joint Sliding Scale Association until it was terminated in 1903. From 1892 to 1898 the South Wales miners did not work on the first Monday of each month, a scheme to limit output in order to maintain wages [it also gave opportunities for holding miners' meetings]. This was known as 'Mabon's Monday.'

In 1885 he was elected M.P. for the Rhondda division, the first miners' representative from South Wales; he represented Rhondda West, 1918-22. He was associated with the radical wing of the Liberal Party until 1906 when the Labour Party became a separate political organization, although the Miners' Federation did not become affiliated until 1909.

Mabon, however, did not take an active part in political life; his main importance lies in the history of trade unionism in Wales. The miners were at first loosely organized in a number of small and independent local bodies. Mabon strove to preserve their autonomy despite the urge of younger miners to form a more unified and firmly-knit organization. They were successful, and in 1898 the South Wales Miners' Federation was formed, and Mabon became its first president. He tried to exert a moderating and conciliating influence on his followers, but could not prevent the series of critical disputes which produced the first general miners' strike in 1912.

His other great interest was the eisteddfod. His burly appearance and powerful voice were features which made him well known and effective as a conductor of eisteddfodau at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a period during which the eisteddfod attracted enormous crowds. He would often sing to the audiences, as he was endowed with a good tenor voice.

In 1860 he married Sarah, daughter of David Williams; she died in 1900, having borne him three sons and three daughters.

Mabon was made a Privy Councillor in 1911. He died at Pentre, Rhondda, 14 May 1922.

Author

Professor Huw Morris-Jones, (1912)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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The Times, 15 May 1922

T. Marchant Williams, *Welsh Members of Parliament, 1894* (Cardiff 1894)

private information

Further Reading

D. Ben Rees, *Cofiant Mabon: Eilun Cenedl y Cymry a'r Glowyr* (Lerpwl 2023)

NLW Archives: General Election 1906 Wales and Monmouthshire. A Souvenir containing photographs, biographical sketches etc., of all the Welsh MP's: William Abraham

ODNB: Abraham, William [pseud. Mabon] (1842-1922)

Wikipedia Article: William Abraham

Images

William Abraham, esq. M.P. (Mabon), Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent, 13 May 1892, p.7

NLW: *LLYFRAU FFOTO 4429 B: Famous Welshmen*

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