

RATHBONE, WILLIAM (1819 - 1902), philanthropist

Name: William Rathbone
Date of birth: 1819
Date of death: 1902
Child: Eleanor Florence Rathbone
Gender: Male
Occupation: philanthropist
Area of activity: Philanthropy
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

His career is sketched in *D.N.B. Second Supplement*, and there is a biography (1905) by his daughter Eleanor Frances Rathbone. He was born 11 February 1819, of a Liverpool family whose eldest sons for six consecutive generations were named 'William' - as many as four of these figure in *D.N.B.*

The family was originally Quaker, but in later times became Unitarian; very prosperous in business, the Rathbones were withal generous and conscientious philanthropists, and convinced Radicals.

The William Rathbone noticed here came first into contact with Wales in November 1880, when he was elected Member of Parliament for Caernarvonshire; when in 1885 that electorate was divided, he continued to represent its northern division till 1895, retiring then because he disagreed with the growing political nationalism of his fellow-members for Wales. He took a leading part in the inception of the University College of North Wales (1884); it is true that he felt at first that Aberystwyth College should have been recognized as the college for North Wales, but as soon as Bangor was fixed upon, it was Rathbone who asked Sir Henry Jones to draft its charter (pp. 350-5 of the biography), and he contributed and collected money towards scholarships; he was vice-president of the college from 1884 till 1892, and then president till 1900. In and out of Parliament, he worked hard for the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889; he was especially interested in the school at Bethesda, Caernarfonshire, where he saw an opportunity for technical education, a matter of keen interest to him. He died 6 March 1902.

His great-niece (see J. E. Griffith, *Pedigrees*, 134), MARY FRANCES RATHBONE (died 1937), did much for the University College at Bangor, and for the adult education movement; she received an honorary LL.D. degree from the University of Wales in 1934.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Further reading

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

NLW Archives: [To the electors of Carnarvonshire](#)

Published date: 1959

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