

## WILLIAMS, WILLIAM LLEWELYN (1867 - 1922), Member of Parliament, lawyer, and author

**Name:** William Llewelyn Williams  
**Date of birth:** 1867  
**Date of death:** 1922  
**Spouse:** Elinor Williams (née Jenkins)  
**Parent:** Sarah Williams (née Davies)  
**Parent:** Morgan Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Member of Parliament, lawyer, and author  
**Area of activity:** Law; Literature and Writing; Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 10 March 1867 at Brownhill, Llansadwrn, Towy valley (on 15 September 1938 a memorial which had been erected in front of the house was unveiled), the second son of Morgan Williams and his wife Sarah (Davies). The family was well off, and had a tradition of Independency; his grandfather, Morgan Williams, had been an elder at Capel Isaac before moving from Ffrwd-wen (Llandeillo) to Brownhill, and two of his father's brothers were ministers, namely JOHN WILLIAMS (1819 - 1869), who was first of all minister of Llangadog close by, and later of Newcastle Emlyn with Capel Iwan (*H. Egl. Ann.*, iii, 421-2), and BENJAMIN WILLIAMS (1830 - 1886), who was at Gwernllwyn (Dowlais), Denbigh, and Canaan (Swansea) and who was the author of a number of books (*H. Egl. Ann.*, v, 123-5).

Llewelyn Williams was educated at Llandovery College, and afterwards (October 1885) entered Brasenose College, Oxford. He was there when the Dafydd ab Gwilym Society was founded (see T. Rowland Hughes in *Y Llenor*, 1931, and his own recollections in *Cymru O.M.E.*, 1921); in the society he was known by the name of his college - 'the Brasen Nose.' He graduated with 2nd class honours in history, and was *proxime accessit* for the Stanhope Prize. Returning to Wales, he became a journalist; he was, first, editor of the *South Wales Star* at Barry, and then of the *South Wales Post* at Swansea; he was for some time on the staff of the *South Wales Daily News* (Cardiff), and later on the staff of the *London Star*. He wrote comparatively little in Welsh; two stories may be mentioned, *Gwilym a Benni Bach*, 1897 (2nd imp. 1946), an imitation of the American story *Helen's Babies*, and *Gwr y Dolau*, 1899 (2nd imp. 1946) - neither of them is of very high standard; and he wrote some entertaining reminiscences, 'Slawer Dydd,' in *Y Beirniad* in 1917, which were published in book form under the same title in 1918. He published a considerable amount of work in English, notably in the transactions of the Society of Cymmrodorion from 1900 on - some of this was in the form of historical ballads, but there were also some highly important articles on Welsh history, such as the remarkable article on Welsh Roman Catholics on the Continent (*Trans. Cymm.*, 1901-2); a number of these articles appeared in book form in 1919 under the title *The Making of Modern Wales*. He had a substantial knowledge of the Tudor period, and it was he who edited the 'Everyman' edition of J. A. Froude's *History*. When it came to other periods he was inclined to be opinionated, as is illustrated by his refusal to face the facts in the cases of Owain Lawgoch and Iolo Morganwg. He was one of the most loyal adherents of the eisteddfod, and had been president of the National Eisteddfod Society.

From journalism he turned to the law and politics. He was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in January 1897; he later became a Bencher of his Inn. He took silk in 1912; became 'leader' of the South Wales circuit, and recorder of Swansea (1914-5) and of Cardiff (1915-22). His name had been submitted for parliamentary candidature several times before he was elected (1906) Member of Parliament for the Carmarthen boroughs, a seat which he held until it was abolished in 1918. He was a Liberal of the old school, and had no use for socialism. From his Oxford days until his death, he was, above all, a nationalist; and it was on nationalistic grounds rather than on the ground of religious liberationism that he supported the disestablishment and disendowment of the Established Church in Wales. Moreover, he was an advocate of home rule for Wales (and for Ireland, Brittany, and Flanders), but what he wanted was home rule within the framework of the United Kingdom - his article on the Acts of Union (*Trans. Cymm.*, 1907-8, and the corresponding chapter in his book) shows that in his opinion the union with England had been of great benefit to Wales. When it came to the land question, his solution was not to nationalise the land but to increase the number of free-holders. He was second to none in his zeal for the rights of the individual - the old Liberalism once more. He was led to support the 1914 war against his own judgement (he had opposed the Boer War), chiefly because of the German attack on Belgium; but as the war progressed, so did his uneasiness - he opposed conscription, defended conscientious objection, shrank from the Defence of the Realm Act, and at last broke finally and irretrievably with Lloyd George. When he sought election for Cardiganshire in 1921, he was opposed by an official candidate, and was defeated in a very hotly contested election. He died 22 April 1922, leaving a widow, Elinor (Jenkins of Glan Sawdde).

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins**, (1881 - 1969)

### Sources

*Who was who?*

obituary notices (especially by J. Arthur Price in *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxii, 209-22, and the *The Welsh Outlook*, 1922, 134-5)

## Further Reading

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

NLW Archives: The Free Liberal Candidate. To the Parliamentary Electors of the County of Cardiganshire

Wikipedia Article: William Llewelyn Williams

## Additional Links

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