

## WILLIAMS, PETER (Pedr Hir; 1847 - 1922), Baptist minister, author, and eisteddfodwr

**Name:** Peter Williams

**Pseudonym:** Pedr Hir

**Date of birth:** 1847

**Date of death:** 1922

**Parent:** Thomas Williams

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** Baptist minister, author, and eisteddfodwr

**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Religion

**Authors:** Thomas Richards, W. R. Williams

Born 1 May 1847 at Byrdir, Llanynys parish, Vale of Clwyd. His father, Thomas Williams, was a cousin of [Sir Charles James Watkin Williams](#). He frequented the school of [J. D. Jones](#), the musician; in 1868 he was at a Ruthin eisteddfod, enjoying the company of such varied characters as [Nefydd](#), [Talhaiarn](#), and [Llew Llywyo](#). He tried his hand at several occupations before joining the Denbighshire police force in 1870, and from that year till 1880 (except for one spell of keeping school) he kept the peace in rural districts like Pentrefoelas and Llanefydd, moving in the company of men who read and thought, writing a little poetry, attuning his ears to the voices of tradition and folklore. He retired from the police force towards the end of the summer of 1880; he commenced preaching, and without any kind of college education, was, in 1881, invited to become minister to the Baptists of Abergele, where he met [Emrys ap Iwan](#); in 1886 he moved south to Shiloh, Tredegar; in 1897 he became minister of Balliol Road church, Bootle, Lancashire, and there he remained until his death on 24 March, 1922.

In person he was immensely tall, broad in proportion, a fine handsome presence; as a preacher he developed into one of the most powerful in his denomination, with his homely manner, his rich vocabulary from the Vale of Clwyd, preaching sound evangelical doctrine with a background of enlightened humanism. One can follow his developments, both as regards resources and style, from his article on aesthetics and religion in the *Seren Gomer* of 1883 to the address from the chair at the Baptist Union meetings of 1905, ending up with the polished prose of his paper before the Baptist Historical Society in 1911. He composed several hymns; the best known is 'Bydd canu yn y nofedd,' written as early as 1867.

As an eisteddfodwr, he was in the front rank; everybody enjoyed his addresses from the logan stone, with their piercing wit and virile patriotism; they were published as a volume, *Damhegion y Maen Llog*, in 1922. For a time he was a keen competitor himself; he secured the prize for a pastoral ode at the London national eisteddfod, 1887, for a romance at the Brecon national eisteddfod, 1889. He published his *Odlau* in 1879, *Yr Aiffft* in 1885, and *Breuddwyd Sion y Bragwr* in 1890. In his latter years he was full of enthusiasm for the Welsh drama; he had published two scriptural dramas, based on the story of Moses in 1903 and 1907; but his most ambitious effort, *Owain Glyndwr*, was acted and published in 1915. He was deeply touched by the revival of 1904-5, and his *Key and Guide to Welsh*, published in 1911, was really an effort to rouse the young members of his church, many of them with insufficient knowledge of Welsh, to polish up their knowledge of it, examine its niceties, and at the same time open their minds to the doctrines enshrined in the language and bring to fruition the lessons of the revival.

Because of his great literary output and his long and honourable connection with the national festival, the Eisteddfod authorities were glad to avail themselves of the offer of his children that they should endow an annual prize directly associated with Pedr Hir's name.

### Authors

**Thomas Richards**, (1878 - 1962)

**Dr W. R. Williams**

### Sources

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