

WILLIAMS, RICHARD (fl. 1790?-1862?), a writer and singer of ballads ('the king of all the ballad-singers,' said one who had heard him), mostly known as 'Dic Dywyll' ('Blind Dick'), but sometimes also as 'Bardd Gwagedd' ('The Bard of Folly')

Name: Richard Williams
Pseudonym: Dic Dywyll, Blind Dick, Bardd Gwagedd, The Bard Of Folly
Gender: Male
Occupation: a writer and singer of ballads
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts; Poetry
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

He was a native of North Wales - some say of Amlwch, some of Llannerch-y-medd, and some of Llŷn - but it was in South Wales that he really won his reputation. The dates of his birth and death are not known; but a person who heard him in 1862 thought that he was then between 70 and 75 years of age. He was at the Brecon eisteddfod in 1822. It is known, too, that he was singing at Merthyr Tydfil at the time of the riots in 1831; he lived in that town for some years and shared the prize for the bass solo at the 'Swan' eisteddfod in 1834. He was a tubby little man and, as is implied above, he was blind; **Nathan Dyfed** (Jonathan Reynolds) tells us that he used to put his little finger in the corner of his eye when he was singing. It is also said that he earned eight pounds in a single afternoon at Merthyr by the sale of his ballads. And tradition has it that his 'Song on the effect of the new law, or The Workhouse' (for this see **B. B. Thomas**, below, 93-6) caused such an uproar among the working classes of Merthyr that the Guardians did not dare to build a workhouse in that town for nearly twenty years; he also sang during the Rebecca riots. Of his ballads, seventy-three survive in print, and there is a manuscript volume of them in the National Library of Wales (**NLW MS 1143B**). He could turn out some exquisite verse, e.g. 'Lliw gwyn, rhosyn yr haf.' But his own preference was for satire or comic songs which, says **Glaslyn**, were frequently pretty low, with a whiff of the muck-heap about them. He died at Liverpool (where he sang in the 'Cambria' and the 'Portmadoc Arms'), but the date of his death is not known - there is a fragment of an elegy on him in **B. B. Thomas**, 19-20.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

References to him are numerous, but (as intimated) almost all undated: *Cymru (O.M.E.)*, ii, 48; xxii, 7 (*Glaslyn*), xiv, 64, 70 (*Myllin*), xxxiii, 165, etc. (David Samuel), ii, 122 (*Cadrawd*), and other places

David Samuel, *Cerddi Cymru casgliad o ganeuon Cymreig, hen a diweddar*, introduction

B. B. Thomas, *Baledi Morgannwg* (1951)

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