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Cymraeg

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WILLIAMS, ROBERT (1810 - 1881), cleric, Celtic scholar and antiquary

Name: Robert Williams
Date of birth: 1810
Date of death: 1881
Parent: Robert Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric, Celtic scholar and antiquary
Area of activity: History and Culture; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Thomas Jones

Born at Conway 29 June 1810, the second son of Robert Williams, perpetual curate of Llandudno. After receiving his early education at Beaumaris and Shrewsbury schools, he proceeded to Christ College, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1832 and M.A. in 1836. He was curate of Llangernyw, Denbighshire, from 1833 to 1836. In 1837 he was appointed vicar of Llangadwaladr, and in 1838 perpetual curate of Rhydycroesau, near Oswestry. He remained vicar of Llangadwaladr until 1877 and curate of Rhydycroesau until 1879, when he was appointed rector of Culmington, Herefordshire. There he remained until his death, becoming also honorary canon of St Asaph in 1872. He died, unmarried, on 26 April 1881. He was buried on 2 May at Culmington, where a memorial stone bearing an inscription in Welsh and Cornish was erected in his memory in 1889.

In 1831 he won a prize given by the Cymmrodorion Society for biographical sketches of the most famous Welshmen since the Protestant Reformation. The society arranged for a Welsh translation of this work under the title 'Enwogion Cymru.' Later, additions were made to the English original, which was then published - Enwogion Cymru: A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Welshmen (Llandovery, 1852). His most important contribution to Celtic studies is the Lexicon Cornu-Britannicum (Llandovery, 1865). In it, examples of Cornish words are noted and their cognates in the other Celtic languages given. He made considerable use of the treasures of Peniarth Library, and it was he who discovered there the only extant copy of the Cornish drama Beunans Meriasek (or Ordinale de Vita Sancti Mereadoci) which was edited, with translation, by Whitley Stokes (London, 1872). In 1876 was completed the first volume of his Selections from the Hengwrt Manuscripts, and in 1878 and 1880 the first two parts of the second volume appeared. This second volume was completed in 1892 by the Rev. G. Hartwell Jones. Neither the texts nor the translations in these two volumes are always reliable.

His most important works have been noticed above, but he made other contributions to scholarship to which reference must be made. He published The History and Antiquities of the Town of Aberconway (Denbigh, 1835); he revised many of the notes to the new edition (Oswestry, 1878) of the The history of the Gwydir family by Sir John Wynne; he translated 'The Book of Taliesin' for W. F. Skene's Four Ancient Books of Wales (Edinburgh, 1868); and he wrote occasional articles for Archaeologia Cambrensis and the Cambrian Journal. He was a member of the editional board of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.

Author

Professor Thomas Jones

Sources

Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1881, 172-4

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

T. R. Roberts, Eminent Welshmen: a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen... from the earliest times to the present (1908)

Works

Robert Williams, A biographical sketch of some of the most eminent individuals which the Principality of Wales has produced since the Reformation (London 1836)

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