

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM (1788 - 1865), Member of Parliament

Name: William Williams
Date of birth: 1788
Date of death: 1865
Parent: Esther Williams (née Phillips)
Parent: Thomas Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: Member of Parliament
Area of activity: Education; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: David Williams

Born 12 February 1788 at Tredarren, in the parish of Llanpumpsaint, Carmarthenshire, the fourth son of Thomas Williams and Esther Phillips. He was educated only in the school held in the parish church, where **David Owen** (Brutus,) was a contemporary. After apprenticeship to a shopkeeper in Carmarthen he obtained, in 1804, a post in a wholesale cotton warehouse in Bread Street in the city of London. By 1820 he had set up on his own account as a wholesale cotton and linen warehouseman, and he amassed a great fortune. He travelled extensively in foreign countries, including Russia and the United States, in the interests of his business. He had a good mastery of foreign languages.

He became a member of the Common Council of the City of London in 1833 and, in 1835, Member of Parliament for Coventry. With Joseph Hume, he was for many years the leading radical in the House of Commons, advocating the ballot, shorter parliaments, an extension of the franchise, and various other reforms. A Churchman, he yet believed in the separation of Church and state. He was defeated at Coventry in 1847, but was returned for Lambeth in 1850, and retained his seat until his death at Regent's Park on 28 April 1865.

On 10 March 1846 he moved an address that 'an Inquiry be made into the state of Education in the Principality of Wales, especially into the means afforded to the labouring classes of acquiring a knowledge of the English tongue.' It was this address which led to the establishment of the Education Commission, whose report has been designated 'the treason of the **Blue-books**.' In 1848 he wrote two pamphlets: *A Letter to Lord John Russell on the Report of the Commissioners* (answered by **Evan Jones** (Ieuan Gwynedd) in his *A Vindication of the Education and Moral Condition of Wales*) and a *Second Letter on the present defective state of Education in Wales*. He presided at the meeting held at the Freemasons' Tavern, London, 1 December 1863, to further university education in Wales, and promised a gift of £1,000 for this purpose. He made provision for this gift in a codicil inserted into his will a few weeks before his death. A bust, by **Joseph Edwards** is in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Author

Emeritus Professor David Williams, (1900 - 1978)

Sources

Daniel Evans, *Life and Work of William Williams M.P. for Coventry 1835-1847, M.P. for Lambeth 1850-1865* (Llandysul 1939)

Further Reading

NLW Archives: Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales: Part 1: Carmarthen, Glamorgan and Pembroke

NLW Archives: Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales: Part 2: Brecknock, Cardigan, Radnor and Monmouth

NLW Archives: Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales: Part 3: North Wales, comprising Anglesey, Carnarvon, Denbigh, Flint, Meirioneth and Montgomery

Wikipedia Article: [William Williams](#)

Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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Williams, D., (1959). WILLIAMS, WILLIAM (1788 - 1865), Member of Parliament. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-WILL-WIL-1788>

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