

WILSON, RICHARD (1713-1782), landscape painter

Name: Richard Wilson
Date of birth: 1713
Date of death: 1782
Parent: Alice Wilson (née Wynne)
Parent: John Wilson
Gender: Male
Occupation: landscape painter
Area of activity: Art and Architecture; Nature and Agriculture
Authors: John Edward Horatio Steegman, Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate

A member of the Wilson family of Bwlch-y-llyn and Y Ffynnant, Trefeglwys, Montgomeryshire., one of the old Welsh families of Arwystli.

HUGH WILSON, M.A. (1651 - 1687), vicar

of Trefeglwys (1674) and also of Llangurig (1676), was the son of RICHARD (died 1688) and Joanna (died 1678) Wilson, Bwlch-y-llyn, Trefeglwys. He married (1679) Maria (died 1688), widow of William Lloyd, Maes-bangor, Llanbadarn-fawr, Cardiganshire. There were five children, John (1680), Maria (1681), Margareta (1683), Elizabeth (1684), and Ursula (1687). Elizabeth became the second wife of Sir John Pratt (1657 - 1725) and mother of Charles (1714 - 1794), lord Camden (1765), later (1786) earl Camden, lord chancellor. Richard, the painter, was therefore, on the paternal side, first cousin to lord Camden.

JOHN WILSON (1680 - 1728), vicar

Son of Hugh, was ordained in 1703. He became rector of Gwaunysgor (1709-11), and subsequently of Penegoes (1711-28); he died 31 August 1728, and was buried 4 September 1728, at his native Trefeglwys. He and his wife Alice had six children, five sons and one daughter. Richard, the painter, was the third son, and his only sister became attendant on lady Sundon, lady of the bedchamber to the queen.

RICHARD WILSON (1713-1782), landscape painter

Third son of the above John and his wife Alice, was born in August 1713 at Penegoes near Machynlleth. His mother was of the Wynne family of Leeswood near Mold, and Richard passed his boyhood at Mold. He was sent up to London, with the help of Sir George Wynne, in 1729, and there trained as a portrait painter. He enjoyed some success in this branch, and in 1748 painted a group of the future George III and the duke of York as children. He also painted some landscapes at this period, including two for the Foundling Hospital, 1746, and a View of Dover, which was engraved in 1747; at Philadelphia there is a View of Westminster Bridge signed and dated 1746.

In 1750 Wilson went to Venice and thence, in 1751, to Rome, where he remained six years. From Rome he made painting expeditions to Tivoli, the Alban Hills, and the Neapolitan coast. While in Italy, he abandoned portraiture for landscape, on the advice of Vernet and Zuccarelli. In 1757 he left Italy and settled in London. He exhibited landscapes at the Society of Artists, 1760-8, his first and most famous being the 'Niobe,' painted for the duke of Cumberland. In 1768 he became one of the foundation members of the Royal Academy, of which he was appointed librarian in 1776. In 1781 Wilson retired to live at Colomendy, near Mold, where his brother acted as agent for the owner, Catherine Jones, their kinswoman. He died 15 May 1782, and was buried at Mold.

Many of Wilson's favourite subjects were repeated, often indifferently, by himself; and his style was much copied after his death. He suffered neglect and some distress in his lifetime, but is now ranked among the great landscape-painters of 18th century Europe. At his best, he is a master of style; as an interpreter of light he is the successor of Claude and Cuyp, and an inspirer of Constable and Turner. His own inspiration came equally from Italy and Wales, enabling him to express romantic emotion within a classical framework.

Wilson is represented in most of the chief public collections of Europe and America. His portrait, painted by Mengs in Rome, is in the National Museum of Wales.

Authors

John Edward Horatio Steegman, (1899 - 1966)

Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate, (1901 - 1982)

Sources

Wright, *Some account of the life of Richard Wilson, Esq., R.A. with testimonies to his genius and memory, and remarks on his landscapes. To which are added, various observations respecting the pleasure and advantages to be derived from the study of nature and the fine arts* (London 1824)

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Catalogue of Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson (Hull 1936)

Catalogue of an exhibition of pictures by Richard Wilson and his circle organized by the City Museum and Art Gallery (Birmingham 1949)

Adrian Bury, *Richard Wilson, R.A. The grand classic* (Leigh-on-Sea 1947)

Constable, *Richard Wilson* (London 1950)

Trefeglwys registers, through the courtesy of the vicar

D.R.T., *The Registers of Trefeglwys, Collections historical & archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire and its borders*, Vol.32, pp. 203-222

Evan Edwardes, *Trefeglwys Register, Collections historical & archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire and its borders*, Vol.33, pp. 17-56

Richard Bennett, *Methodistiaeth Trefeglwys, 1754-1814* (Llanidloes 1932)

manuscript notes by Sir John Edward Lloyd in the library of the University College, Bangor

personal research

Further reading

Rita Singer, *Through Wales in the Footsteps of William Gilpin: Illustrated Travel Accounts by Early French Tourists, 1768-1810*

ArtUK: [Richard Wilson: the father of British landscape painting](#)

Works

Richard Wilson, *Miss Catherine Jones of Colomendy, near Mold*

National Museum Wales: WILSON, Richard

ArtUK: Richard Wilson

Additional Links

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