

WARRINGTON, WILLIAM (1735-1824), historian and dramatist

Name: William Warrington
Date of birth: 1735
Date of death: 1824
Spouse: Dorothy Warrington (née Lever)
Child: Dorothy La Grange (née Warrington)
Parent: Elizabeth Warrington (née Thornhill)
Parent: George Warrington
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian and dramatist
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing
Author: Gerald Morgan

William Warrington was born at Brynyffynnon, Wrexham in 1735, the fifth of eight children of George Warrington (1695-1770) and his wife Elizabeth (née Thornhill, 1706-1788). Both his parents were from Lancashire and of minor gentry status. The place of his education is unknown. He married Dorothy Lever, and they had one daughter, Dorothy, who married James Brasier La Grange of Westminster and died in 1794 at the age of 31.

William Warrington is known to have been living at Chester in 1755. In 1775 he is described as 'Wm. Warrington Esq. of Clapham', and in a document signed by his wife in 1788 as 'William Warrington of Woodford, Essex - Clerk'. He was ordained by the Bishop of St Asaph in 1784, and in February 1786 he became chaplain to the politician William Ponsonby, second earl of Bessborough (1704-1793). Presumably it was Bessborough who secured for him the living of Old Windsor in Berkshire, to which he was appointed in 1789. The church has a wall-memorial to his wife, who died in 1806, and an inscription on the family tomb gives death dates for all family members, including daughter, granddaughter and two great-grandchildren. His will is held in the Canterbury records. He is the author of two forgotten dramas, [The Cambrian Hero, or Llewelyn the Great](#) (?1803) and [Alphonso King of Castile, A Spanish Tragedy](#) (1813). A poem by him entitled 'On Old Windsor Church-yard' is quoted in [John Evans, An Excursion to Windsor, in July 1810](#) (1817), pp. 345-6.

His major work is [The History of Wales](#), published in London by Joseph Johnson in 1786, with a dedication to William, Duke of Devonshire (1748-1811). Subsequent reprints appeared in 1788, 1791, 1805 and 1823. The second edition contains two maps by [William Owen \(Pughe\)](#), one of the medieval divisions of Wales and the other of modern Wales; it appears that Warrington was introduced to [Owen](#) by [Iolo Morganwg](#), with whom he is known to have corresponded (although no letters appear to have survived).

Warrington's sympathy for his subject is made clear in the Preface to his History, which concludes: '[T]he author thinks it necessary to declare that he is an Englishman; and whatever preponderancy may be discovered in this work to the side of the Welsh, it is neither the partiality of an author to his subject, nor the prejudice of a native; but the voluntary tribute of justice and humanity to the cause of injured liberty.' The 628-page work begins with a guide to Welsh pronunciation. It is well-footnoted, citing many printed sources, but pays no attention to [Geoffrey of Monmouth](#) and his fantasies. In general it is a judicious study, covering the centuries from the Roman occupation to the 1294-5 rising. Although there is no bibliography, the abbreviations in the footnotes are easily recognisable and wide-ranging. The only obscurity is his references to Welsh Chron, but the page numbers show that he is quoting a copy of [The historie of Cambria](#) (1584), the body of which is a translation of Brut y Tywysogion. Until Warrington published his work, the staple history of Wales had been [William Wynne's The History of Wales](#) (1697 and reprints), which was really a reworking of the 1584 volume.

William Warrington died on 31 January 1824, aged 89, and was buried on 9 February at Old Windsor.

Author

Gerald Morgan

Sources

G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg* (Caerdydd 1956), pp. 424-5

Geraint H. Jenkins, Ffion Mair Jones and David Ceri Jones (eds), *The Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff 2007), p. 267

Iolo a Menai Roberts, 'William Owen (Pughe) y Mapiwr', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, 30.3 (summer 1998), 295-322

[rootsweb](#)

[Clergy of the Church of England database](#)

[National Archives, PROB 11/1739/157](#)

[Berkshire Family History Society website](#)

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