

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM GILBERT (1874 - 1966), schoolmaster and local historian

Name: William Gilbert Williams

Date of birth: 1874

Date of death: 1966

Parent: Catherine Williams (née Jones)

Parent: John Williams

Gender: Male

Occupation: schoolmaster and local historian

Area of activity: Education; History and Culture; Literature and Writing

Authors: Mary Auronwy James, Gareth Haulfryn Williams

Born in Tŷr Capel, Rhostryfan, Llanwnda, Caernarfonshire, 20 January 1874, son of John Williams, slate quarryman, and Catherine (née Jones) his wife. One of his brothers was 'J.W. of London'. He left the local school when he was nine years old to work in Cilgwyn quarry but returned as a pupil-teacher and won a scholarship to enter Bangor Normal College, 1892-94. He was appointed the first schoolmaster of Felinwnda school, Llanwnda, in 1895, and held a similar post at Rhostryfan from 1918 until he retired in 1934. He was a pioneering schoolmaster, using Welsh as a medium of education, and succeeding in arousing his pupils' interest in the history and culture of their neighbourhood. He described his method of teaching in *Y Cymro Bach* (1909). As a local and county councillor (1951-61) he held a prominent place in the public life of the county. He was elected an elder of Horeb (Presb.) in 1909, and Moderator of Arfon Presbytery, and he received a Gee medal c. 1962 for his work in the Sunday school over a very long period.

He was an historian of note who gave many lectures in the surrounding districts on local history, and he was one of the founders and president (1947-57) of Caernarfonshire Historical Society. He composed two historical plays in cyghanedd, countless cywyddau and englynion. Among his numerous booklets are *Cerddi gogan - beirdd newydd* (1904-06), *Hanes pentref Rhostryfan* (1926), *Breision hanes o 1688 hyd 1720*, (1928), *Olion hynafol* (1944) and a volume of school songs. He printed and bound some of his booklets himself. Many articles written by him appeared in local periodicals and papers, particularly in *Y Genedl*, where an occasional argument arose between him and his friend **Bob Owen**, demonstrating the more disciplined and academic method of Gilbert Williams of studying history. He was also a contributor to *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940*. A selection of his work was published (Gareth Haulfryn Williams, ed.) in *Moel Tryfan i'r Traeth* (1983). He received an hon. M.A. degree of the University of Wales in 1930 for his contribution to the history of the nation. Some of his MSS. are in the Caernarfon Record Office and the National Library of Wales. He died a bachelor, 10 October 1966, at his home, Tal-y-bont, Rhostryfan.

Authors

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Gareth Haulfryn Williams

Sources

Yr Herald Cymraeg a'r Genedl, 17 October 1966

Y Goleuad, 7 December 1966, 6

information from Mair Eluned Pritchard, Pontllyfni

see *Y Casglwr pob peth printiedig*, nos. 4, 5 and 12 for a bibliography of his pamphlets

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Published date: 2001

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