

WILLIAMS, HUW OWEN ('Huw Menai '; 1886 - 1961), poet

Name: Huw Owen Williams
Pseudonym: Huw Menai
Date of birth: 1886
Date of death: 1961
Spouse: Ann Williams
Child: Alun Menai Williams
Parent: Elizabeth Williams
Parent: Hugh Owen
Parent: William Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Sally Roberts Jones

Born 4 Rathborne Court, Caernarfon 13 July 1886, registered as the son of Elizabeth Williams and her husband William Williams, slate-quarryman, though it has been suggested that his natural father may have been one Hugh Owen. He left school at the age of twelve but continued to read widely and worked at various short-term jobs to help support himself and his mother. At the age of sixteen he went to work in the pits in Gilfach Goch, Glamorganshire., but did not move there permanently until he was 18, when he and his mother moved to Merthyr Vale to join his father. There he began to organise and address political meetings, and to write political articles for the *Social Democrat*, the *Social Review* and *Justice*. He soon lost his job because of his political activities but as he was now married with a young family, he accepted a job as a weigher (the employers' representative). This put an end to his political activities (though one of his sons, Alun Menai Williams, also became a political activist, fighting in the Spanish Civil War).

He began to write poetry during World War I; his work appeared in local papers such as the *Merthyr Express* and the *Western Mail*, and his first book, *Through the upcast shaft* was published in 1920; it was followed by *The Passing of Guto* (1927), *Back in return* (1933) and *The simple vision* (1945). Though he made many friends (including **John Cowper Powys**) in London literary circles, he was often unemployed, and in 1949, when the Port Talbot Forum was active in helping him to obtain a civil list pension, he was living on £2.17s.0d. a week. In later years he lived in Penygraig in the Rhondda. His autobiography remains unpublished. He married Ann in 1910 and died 28 June 1961.

Author

Sally Roberts Jones

Sources

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Gwyn Thomas, *A Welsh eye* (London 1964)

R. Felstead, *No other way Jack Russia and the Spanish Civil War A Biography* (Port Talbot 1981)(1989), 36-41

The Transactions of the Port Talbot Historical Society, II, i, 68

research into family history by Huw Roberts

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Huw Menai](#)

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