

## PARRY-WILLIAMS, HENRY (1858 - 1925), schoolmaster and poet

**Name:** Henry Parry-williams  
**Date of birth:** 1858  
**Date of death:** 1925  
**Spouse:** Ann Parry-Williams (née Morris)  
**Child:** Jennie Eurwen Parry-Williams  
**Child:** Mary Blodwen Parry-Williams  
**Child:** Richard Wynne Parry-Williams  
**Child:** John Oscar Parry-Williams  
**Child:** Willie Francis Parry-Williams  
**Child:** Thomas Herbert Parry-Williams  
**Parent:** Mary Parry  
**Parent:** Thomas Parry Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** schoolmaster and poet  
**Area of activity:** Education; Eisteddfod; Poetry  
**Author:** Thomas Parry

Born 11 June 1858, the son of Thomas and Mary Parry, Gwyndy, Carmel, Caernarfonshire. He was a half-brother of Robert Parry, father of the poet **R. Williams Parry** and of Richard Parry, father of **Thomas Parry** (1904 - 1985). As a young man he adopted the surname of his paternal grandfather, Henry Williams, in addition to his own. He received his elementary education at Bron-y-foel school, and stayed on for five years as a pupil-teacher. He then attended Holt Academy under James Oliver Jones. He spent the last four months of 1876 as a temporary teacher at Loveston school, near Narberth, Pembrokeshire. In 1877 he entered Bangor Normal College, and on completing the course in 1879 he was appointed schoolmaster at Rhyd-ddu, where he remained until his retirement in 1923.

Parry-Williams's poetry, of which he wrote a good deal, was in accordance with the standards of his age. Three long poems in the free metres won prizes at local *eisteddfodau* (see *Y Geninen Eisteddfodol*, 1892, 1893, 1897). He was successful at the national *eisteddfod* held at Colwyn Bay in 1910 with nine lyrics on the subject 'Y bywyd pentrefol'. His main productions were poems to celebrate various happenings in his own locality, and a few lyrics (see *Cerddi Eryri*, ed. **Carneddog**). As schoolmaster he made the study of Welsh literature an integral part of the syllabus, a very unusual initiative in those days, especially in an elementary school. The pupils were taught something about the various schools of Welsh poetry throughout the centuries, and about the chief prose writers up to the eighteenth century. This Parry-Williams regarded as being educationally sound and the means of ensuring that his pupils took pride in their nation's achievements. Another unusual practice of his was to receive in his home during the summer months Continental scholars who wished to learn Welsh. This began in 1899 with Professor Heinrich Zimmer of Greifswald University, and there followed some of the best-known Continental Celticists, such as Herman Osthoff of Heidelberg, Rudolf Thurneysen of Freiburg, and A.G. van Hamel of Utrecht.

Parry-Williams married Ann Morris, Glangwyrfa, Rhyd-ddu, in 1885, and they had two daughters and four sons (one of whom was **T.H. Parry-Williams**, 1887 - 1975). He died on Christmas Day 1925 and was buried at Beddgelert.

### Author

**Sir Thomas Parry**, (1904 - 1985)

### Sources

Personal knowledge

*Y Genhinen*, xxviii, 66-70

*Cymru (O.M.E.)*, xx, 112-4

*The Place of Welsh in the curriculum of Elementary Schools an address delivered by Mr Parry Williams, Rhyd-ddu, to the Carnarvonshire Teachers' Association, on Saturday, April 8, 1911* (Caernarfon 1911)

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