

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM MATTHEWS (1885-1972), musician

Name: William Matthews Williams
Date of birth: 1885
Date of death: 1972
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Born 9 December 1885 at Pen y Bonc, Burwen, near Amlwch, Anglesey, the son of Richard and Ellen Williams, Victoria House, Amlwch. He showed musical promise at an early age. Encouraged by the local schoolmaster John Matthews, his parents bought him a small American organ, which he taught himself to play, and by the age of eight he was a regular accompanist at services in Capel Mawr, Amlwch. In 1898 he won a scholarship to Llangefni Intermediate School and had music lessons there from Miss A. L. Greaves. He left school at 17 to work at the ironmonger's shop in Victoria House.

In 1906, when a new pipe organ was opened at Capel Mawr, he was appointed organist, and studied with **Roland Rogers** (1847-1927), the organist of Bangor Cathedral. In the following year he won a Stainer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Music to study voice and organ, and gained his ARCO diploma in 1909, when he returned to Amlwch. Having gained his FRCO in 1911 he returned to London to work as a private music teacher and deputy organist of the Whitfield Tabernacle.

In 1912 he was appointed organist of Seion chapel, Llanrwst, where he was able to design a new organ, installed in 1913. From then on he pursued a career as a music teacher, adjudicator and composer. In 1920 he moved to Chester as organist of City Road chapel, and conductor of the Chester Welsh Choral Union from 1922. Between 1920 and 1930 he was also conductor of the Rhyl Choral Society, and chorus master of the National Eisteddfod choir at Holyhead in 1927. During his time in Chester he counted the young **David Lloyd** (1912-1969) among his pupils, and it was he who prepared **Lloyd** for his audition at the Guildhall. In 1934 he returned to Amlwch, established a Choral Union there and resumed his duties as organist at Capel Mawr from 1936. He conducted the 800-strong choir at Caernarfon Castle on the occasion of the royal visit in 1937. From 1944 to 1947 he was Director of the Anglesey Music Festival, and in 1945 conducted the singing at the funeral of **David Lloyd George**. His hymn-tune 'Llanystumdwy' was composed in memory of **Lloyd George**. In 1946 he left Anglesey for Colwyn Bay, where he again conducted the local choral society from 1959 to 1968.

He was an active supporter of the National Eisteddfod, of which he was invested a Fellow in 1969, and a popular adjudicator at competitions and festivals of all kinds. The University of Wales granted him an MA honoris causa in 1957. Rated one of the best conductors of cymanfaoedd canu of his day, he served as Chairman of the Praise Committee of the Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists. He composed numerous songs, hymn-tunes, anthems and part-songs. A collection of his hymn-tunes, *Tannau Moliant*, was published in 1970. His songs, 'Sion y Glyn' and 'Llanfihangel Bachellaeth' are excellent examples of his lyrical style.

He married Margaret Myfanwy Hughes at St John Street chapel, Chester on 9 December 1915. After her death in 1970 he moved to Patcham near Brighton to live with his son, and died at Brighton General Hospital on 11 November 1972. His funeral took place at Hermon chapel, Colwyn Bay on 17 November and his remains were cremated at Colwyn Bay crematorium.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

Eryl Wyn Rowlands, *Gwr annwyl ein prifwyliau* (1986)

Y Goleuad, 3 January 1973

Cardigan and Tivyside Advertiser, 5 January 1973

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