

BULKELEY, WILLIAM (1691 - 1760), squire and diarist

Name: William Bulkeley

Date of birth: 1691

Date of death: 1760

Child: Mary Wright (née Bulkeley)

Gender: Male

Occupation: squire and diarist

Area of activity: Land Ownership; Literature and Writing; Royalty and Society

Author: Thomas Richards

Of Brynddu in Llanfechell, Anglesey. Born 4 November 1691. His surviving diaries are two in number, one extending from 30 March 1734 to 8 June 1743; the other from 1 August 1747 to 28 September 1760. They are perfect treasure-houses of allusion and incident; Anglesey life in the commote of Talybolion never had such an historian. Weather and social customs are described at great length, personal prejudices are rampant, political invective barks and bites, for Bulkeley had no love for Walpole, and less for the Jacobites. There are vitriolic sentences, some as bitter as *Old Testament* denunciations, about the whole body of clerics and especially his own parson of Llanfechell - a kinsman, son of the Bulkeley s of Dronwy, and himself a squire in his own right - putting down his sermons as rubbish, and going to absurd lengths in recording the fees and offerings paid to him in virtue of his office; all of which sounds very convincing did we not also know that squire and parson had their potatoes together, that both had considerable literary interests, and that parson Bulkeley was called (14 November 1752) to witness a most important document by which the squire was obliged to pay his sister Catherine £550 within a year.

Some have said that he had Methodist leanings, and that he wrote a pamphlet to support their tenets. Bulkeley was assuredly no Methodist, and that pamphlet has not yet been discovered. It is true he gave harbourage in 1749 to [William Prichard](#), one of the sturdy pioneers of Nonconformity in the island of Anglesey; but there is no proof that he sympathized in the slightest with [Prichard's](#) outlook on things: he granted him a lease for twenty-one years on the two Clwchdernogs in the parish of Llanddeusant but quarrelled with him in 1760, broke the old lease, but allowed [Prichard](#) a new one for eighteen years. Bulkeley was no Dissenter, but it gave him a malicious joy to see the long faces of men like Owen Morris of Paradvys, Henry Troughton of Bodlew, and the [6th viscount Bulkeley](#), when he met them at Quarter Sessions, all men who had dealt hard with [William Prichard](#) and who would have liked to see him forced to cross the Straits to his native Eifionydd.

Again, the squire of Brynddu was in many ways a thoroughbred son of Anglesey, in love with nature and its manifold wonders, yet he had to see his daughter Mary married to a Saxon brewer of Liverpool. Fortunatus Wright by name, distiller, adventurer, even 'pirate' - the doings of this exotic being, the troubles he brought, and the anxieties he caused fill a good proportion of the two diaries.

Bulkeley was a difficult man, and his character is difficult to assess. [William Morris](#) (1705 - 1763), after a visit to Brynddu early in May 1760, gives a vivid little picture of him as he stood thin-waisted to welcome him at the door; he sums the squire up as a kind and honest man. 'Original' would probably be an even more fitting adjective than either for the greatest 'character' among the Bulkeleys of Brynddu, as the Brynddu branch was in turn the most original and independent in outlook of all the many Bulkeley branches. But one must not over-stress the independence; for the funeral of the [5th viscount Bulkeley](#) in March, 1739, William Bulkeley was among the first to be invited to act as bearer; he started from Brynddu about 5.30 in the morning, and afterwards wrote a full account of the event, not forgetting a sharp criticism of 'the Popish superstition of this countrey of giving meat and drink and money over the corpse with black wooden Bowls to receive the drink.' Modern readers will be quite as much interested in the popish superstition as in the imposing ceremonial at Baron Hill. William Bulkeley was buried 28 October 1760.

Author

Thomas Richards, (1878 - 1962)

Sources

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Plas Coch Manuscript at University College North Wales Library, Bangor 635

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Y Dysgedydd, 1944, 128-9, 147

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