

PUGH, WILLIAM (1783 - 1842), of Bryn-llywarch, Montgomeryshire, Radical landlord and entrepreneur

Name: William Pugh
Date of birth: 1783
Date of death: 1842
Spouse: Beatrix Matilda Pugh (née Dennison)
Parent: William Pugh
Gender: Male
Occupation: Radical landlord and entrepreneur
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Land Ownership
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

Born at Pennant, Berriw, Montgomeryshire, on 26 December 1783. His father, William Pugh (1748 - 1823) of Pennant (later of Caerhowel, which he bought in 1800), belonged to an old county family which he had enriched by his legal practice, was a pioneer of banking in Newtown, and served as sheriff in 1813; his mother was the daughter of William Lewis of Welshpool. Educated at Rugby (to 1802), Trinity, Cambridge (1802-6) and Lincoln's Inn (admitted 5 February 1805), he settled at home at the height of the invasion scare, serving as deputy-lieutenant (1807), and as captain (1809), and major (1813) in the local militia. Although called to the Bar in 1813 (11 February) and occupying chambers in Lincoln's Inn (1814-17), he never practised. In 1816 (5 June) he married Beatrix Matilda Dennison, daughter of a Brighton doctor, of Montgomeryshire extraction, and next year was put on the county bench; soon afterwards he rebuilt and settled in the old family mansion of Brynllwarch. He was an active and lavish supporter of such measures for improved transport as the extension of the Montgomeryshire canal to Newtown (1815-19), the macadamizing of the county's turnpike roads and the opening (1825) of more direct access to South Wales via Newtown and Builth. As a magistrate he was popular and helped to prevent the outbreak of serious food riots in the hard winter of 1830. He organized local support for the Reform Bill, but declined to stand for Parliament and failed to break the fifty years' monopoly of the county seat by [C. W. Williams Wynn](#), in whose eyes Pugh was one of the 'new race of Liberals and independents.' He also promoted popular education, serving (c. 1832) as local representative of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Further measures of his to promote the prosperity of Newtown and district were the building there of a flannel mart which helped to break down the historic Shrewsbury monopoly of wholesale distribution, the promotion of a local newspaper (1835), the *Montgomeryshire Herald*, and the successful agitation to include Newtown among the assize towns for the county. His heavy disbursements, the slow yield of his local investments (including those in the flannel trade, which suffered a general slump at that time), and the attendant failure (1831) of the local bank in which his father had been interested, drained his capital and made him sell up and go abroad to Caen (October 1835). Even there he directed and largely financed a campaign for a railway to carry the Irish mails through Ludlow, Newtown, and Dolgellay to Porthdinllaen (instead of Holyhead). He died on 4 March 1842, and was buried at Caen.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

Sources

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies (1894)*, 261-75

Collections Historical and Archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire, xv, 91-116; xxvi, 337-51

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A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (Cardiff 1933)

A. S. Davies, *Early Banks of Mid-Wales* (Welshpool 1935), 8-9

NLW MS 4187/ 326-31

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