

ROWLAND, THOMAS (1824-1884), cleric and grammarian

Name: Thomas Rowland
Date of birth: 1824
Date of death: 1884
Spouse: Elizabeth Helen Rowland (née Williams)
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and grammarian
Area of activity: Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born in Llanfor parish, Meirionnydd, 5 June 1824, son of a workman on the Rhiwlas estate. His promise attracted the notice of Cleaver, the sinecure rector of the parish, who took him away from the shop at Bala in which he was serving, and sent him to John Williams, vicar of Rhos-y-gwaliau, to be educated for school-teaching. But after a short period at Chelsea Training College, Rowland showed a desire for holy orders, and went to Llandoverly, at that time under [John Williams](#) (1792 - 1858); he did very well there, becoming eventually Welsh master at the school, and publishing his [A grammar of the Welsh language](#) in 1853. He was ordained in 1854, and, after serving as curate at Llansantffraid Glyn Dyfrdwy and at Llanrwst, was promoted by [bishop Short](#), after the exceptionally short period of two years, to the rectory of Pennant Melangell and Pen-y-bont-fawr, Montgomeryshire; in 1878 he became vicar of Rhuddlan, where he died 17 April 1884. Rowland is described as 'slight, weakly, and pale.' Though he published (1875) a volume of sermons, his title to remembrance is his *Welsh Grammar*, which went into four editions (1853, 1857, 1865, 1876) - a volume of *Welsh Exercises* was added in 1870. For a long period, Rowland's was the standard Welsh grammar, and [Sir John Morris-Jones](#), while noting its defects, was yet able to testify that it contained 'a great deal of sound knowledge ... about modern Welsh,' and that it was 'an indication of the reaction of common sense against the dominance of [Pughe](#)'. Rowland was also, for the last ten years of his life, 'corrector' of Welsh place-names for the Ordnance Survey maps; unfortunately, he followed his own opinion of what the names 'ought' to mean, instead of tracing their earliest forms as found in historical records.

He was followed as 'corrector' from 1884 till 1889 by his widow

ELIZABETH HELEN ELLEN

daughter of William Williams, vicar of Llan-rhaeadr, who in her turn adopted his mode of spelling. Under the pseudonym 'Helen Elwy,' she competed for the national eisteddfod prize for a Welsh biographical dictionary; though unsuccessful, she published her work, *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Welshmen, 1700-1900*, in 1907. She died at Colwyn Bay, and was buried at Rhuddlan, 11 April 1910, aged 72.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig (1889-96) (2nd ed.), x, 815

Bye-Gones, relating to Wales and the Border Counties, 1884, 63

William Thomas, (Glanffrwd), *Y Geninen*, 1888, 151-8

Yr Haul, 1892, 119

G. J. Williams in *Y Llenor: cylchgrawn chwarterol dan nawdd cymdeithasau Cymraeg y colegau cenedlaethol*, xii and xiii, on the controversy between Rowland and [Ab Ithel](#)
information from the vicar of Rhuddlan

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