

ROWLANDS, WILLIAM (Gwilym Lleyrn; 1802 - 1865), Wesleyan minister, and bibliographer

Name: William Rowlands
Pseudonym: Gwilym Lleyrn
Date of birth: 1802
Date of death: 1865
Parent: Eleanor Rowlands
Parent: William Rowlands
Gender: Male
Occupation: Wesleyan minister, and bibliographer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Religion
Author: William Llewelyn Davies

Born 24 August 1802 at Bryn croes, Llŷn, Caernarfonshire, son of William and Eleanor Rowlands. He was educated at schools at Bryn croes and Botwnnog and then learnt his father's craft - that of weaving. He was brought up as a Calvinistic Methodist but joined the Wesleyan connexion when he was 18 years old. He began to preach in 1821, shortly before he moved, with his parents, to Tŷ-coch, near Bangor. He preached for some years as a Wesleyan minister. In the latter capacity he served at Merthyr Tydfil 1831, Amlwch 1834, Pwllheli 1835, Newmarket, Flintshire 1837, Ruthin 1840, Llanidloes 1842, Tredegar 1845, Machynlleth 1848, Bryn-mawr 1850, Llanidloes 1853, Tredegar 1856, Aberystwyth 1858, and Machynlleth 1861. He retired from the circuit service in 1864 and settled at Oswestry, partly to act as supernumerary and partly in order to complete and publish (if possible) his greatest work. He died 21 March 1865, and was buried at Caerau, near Llanidloes.

Gwilym Lleyrn was still a young man when he began to interest himself in the collection and listing of books in Welsh and books relating to Wales. His work as a circuit minister gave a searcher such as he was a wonderful opportunity to examine and collect books. The first fruits of his researches appeared in *Y Traethodydd* for 1852-3, under the title of 'Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry' ('Bibliography of the Welsh'). He proposed to issue the work, when completed, as a fifteen-shilling volume. The work was not published, however, until 1869, four years after his death, when it was prepared for the press and edited by **Daniel Silvan Evans** and printed by **John Pryse** of Llanidloes, under the title of *Cambrian Bibliography: containing an account of the books printed in the Welsh language, or relating to Wales, from the year 1546 to the end of the eighteenth century; with biographical notices*. There was also a Welsh title-page, *Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry ...*, and it is under this Welsh title that bibliographers and historians of literature in Wales and elsewhere know the work and refer to it. This was at the time a notable achievement, and, although it has its imperfections and its errors of fact, the book continues to be a most useful work of reference; when it is realised that there were in the time of the compiler no Welsh libraries at Cardiff, Aberystwyth, or Bangor, the achievement of the author must be regarded as remarkable.

Rowlands edited *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleaidd* from 1842 to 1845, and again from 1852 to 1856; he also contributed to periodicals such as *Golud yr Oes* and *Y Brython*. His other published works were concerned with religion and denominational controversy. He wrote a series of biographical articles on famous Welshmen; after his death the manuscript of the work was acquired by **Isaac Foulkes** who incorporated some of the material in his *Geiriadur Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru* (Liverpool, 1870), and referred to it there as the 'Lleyrn MSS.' A memoir of Rowlands, by his son-in-law, R. Morgan, appeared in the twelve issues of *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleaidd* for 1868; see also **D. Silvan Evans**'s preface to *Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry*.

Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru (1870)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Rowlands](#)

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