

WILLIAMS, PETER BAILEY (1763 - 1836), cleric and writer

Name: Peter Bailey Williams
Date of birth: 1763
Date of death: 1836
Spouse: Charlotte Williams
Spouse: Hannah Williams (née Jones)
Child: Henry Bailey Williams
Parent: Mary Williams (née Jenkins)
Parent: Peter Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and writer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Religion; Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Authors: Griffith Thomas Roberts, Ioan Bowen Rees

Born at Llandyfaelog, Carmarthenshire, 1763 (christened 2 August), son of [Peter Williams](#) (1723 - 1796) and brother of [Eliezer Williams](#), the antiquary. He was educated at Carmarthen grammar school and Jesus College, Oxford (B.A. from Christ Church, 1790). He was ordained deacon February 1788 and priest the following November. He was a curate in England until 1792, when he was made rector of Llan-rug and Llanberis, where he spent the rest of his life; in addition, he was for some years (1815-25?) perpetual curate of Betws Garmon.

He married (1) Hannah Jones of Llanrwst (died 1835) in September 1804, by whom he had a son, HENRY BAILEY WILLIAMS (1805 - 1879), rector of Llanberis (1836-43) and Llan-rug (1843-79); and (2) Charlotte Hands (widow) of Shrewsbury (died 1849) in November 1835.

He was a prominent figure in the public life of Caernarvonshire for a very long time and was a justice of the peace for more than a quarter of a century. Many of his letters on public affairs will be found in the Porth yr Aur manuscripts in the University College, Bangor, library. In politics he was Conservative, a fact amply borne out by the articles he wrote condemning the supporters of the French Revolution; but he was an ardent supporter of the movement for the education of the masses and there is little doubt that the Sunday school he started at Llan-rug in 1793 was one of the first in Caernarvonshire.

He was the friend and patron of the local writers - [Dafydd Ddu](#) and his friends - and had a hand in bringing out the *Greal, neu Eurgrawn* ([Ieuan Lleyrn](#)) in 1800, and *Trysorfa Gwybodaeth* ([Dafydd Ddu](#)) in 1807. He collected a number of old manuscripts for his library and copied the contents of others; most of them are among the 'Gwyneddion' manuscripts in the University College, Bangor, library, but some are in the National Library of Wales. From time to time he published, in the newspapers and periodicals of the day, extracts from some of these and English translations of portions of others - often enough under pseudonyms such as 'Pant' and 'Peris.' In addition to helping document-hunters like Nicholas Carlisle and

William Cathrall, he also published *The Tourist's Guide to the County of Caernarvon*, 1821, while shorter articles written by him were published in *Gwyneddion*, 1832 (on the history of Anglesey), and in the Cymmrodorion *Transactions*, 1843 (on the Welsh monasteries and abbeys). He translated two of Richard Baxter's books into Welsh under the titles: *Tragwyddol Orphwysfa'r Saint*, 1825, and *Galwad i'r Annychweledig*, 1825. Although there is little originality in his work, he deserves praise for refusing to be led astray by [William Owen Pughe](#)'s system of orthography and for his discernment in seeing that [Iolo Morganwg](#)'s claims about the 'Gorsedd of the Bards' were false.

In 1798 he led the first recorded rock climb in Britain, probably the east Terrace of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (a 'moderate' climb according to the first climbing guides: 'easy' today). He was acting as guide for the botanist Bingley at the time but it was his idea to venture up the rock: he was wearing nailed boots and when Bingley failed to follow him he extended his belt to assist him. On another occasion he took Bingley across to Cwm Idwal and then to the summits of Tryfan, y Gluder Fawr and Gluder Fach : on the summit of Tryfan he frightened him by leaping from Adam to Eve, as the two rocks above the eastern precipice are called. He did not make much comment on the mountains in his Caernarfonshire travel-book but it is difficult to believe that he would have acted a guide for a stranger had he not been familiar with the difficult places. Evan Roberts suggested that he was the 'fabled parson' immortalized in the name Clogwyn y Person ('Parson's Precipice'): that may be so but it was in the 1840 s, after Williams's death, that J.H. Cliffe met the unknown 'climbing parson' whom he describes.

He died 22 November 1836, and was buried at Llan-rug.

Authors

Reverend Griffith Thomas Roberts, (1887 - 1977)

Dr Ioan Bowen Rees, (1929 - 1999)

Sources

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William Bingley, *North Wales, including its scenery, antiquities, customs and some sketches of its natural history; delineated from two excursions ... during the summers of 1798 and 1801* (London 1804)(1804)

G.A. Lister, in *The mountains of Snowdonia* (London 1948) (2 ed., 1948), 51-2

Evan Roberts, 'Natural History Notes' in H. I. Banner and P. Crew, *Clogwyn Du'r Arddu* (1963)

Alan Hankinson, *The Mountain Men, an early history of rock climbing in North Wales* (London 1977)(1977)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Peter Bailey Williams](#)

Additional Links

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Wikidata: [Q7172638](#)

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