

WILLIAMS, DAVID (Alaw Goch; 1809 - 1863), coal-owner and eisteddfodwr

Name: David Williams
Pseudonym: Alaw Goch
Date of birth: 1809
Date of death: 1863
Spouse: Ann Williams (née Morgan)
Child: Gwilym Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: coal-owner and eisteddfodwr
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Eisteddfod
Author: Watkin William Price

Born 12 July 1809 at Llwyn Drain in the parish of Ystrad Owen, Glamorganshire. About 1821 his parents removed to Aberdare, and for a time he followed his father's trade as a sawyer. But he soon left that for coal-mining, and with marked ability, grit, perseverance, and a large measure of luck he soon attained a prominent position in the coal-mining world of South Wales. His first attempt at becoming a coal-owner was in partnership with Lewis Lewis (of Cefn Coed) at Ynyscynon, Cwm-bach, where they began sinking a pit in 1847, and entered into a lease of a coal-mine, dated 31 December 1844, for 48 years (N.L.W. Ewenny MS. 374). After Lewis gave up, David Williams carried on alone. After being successful here, he soon opened another colliery at Aberaman, obtaining a lease from **Crawshay Bailey** who gave him much assistance. This colliery at Aberaman was generally known as Williams's Pit. Then he sank the Deep Duffryn colliery at Mountain Ash, and, after winning the coal, he sold the colliery to John Nixon for £42,000. With this money he again sank another colliery at Cwmdare in 1853, and, after a further success, he again sold out. In this way he attained great wealth, buying up lands at Llanwynno (see **Glanffrd**, *Llanwynno*, 1949), Trealaw (in the Rhondda Valley), which is named after him, and Miskin Manor.

Although he became a man of wealth, he remained in close touch with the working classes, presiding and conducting and sometimes adjudicating at their eisteddfodau. Fond of composing Welsh poetry himself, he became a popular figure in the literary world of Wales, universally esteemed by all classes. He spent considerable sums of money in helping on the movement to establish the national eisteddfod alternately in North and South Wales, attending meetings at his own expense in both districts (**D. M. Richards**, *Rhestr Eisteddfodau*, xxv-xxvii).

He was married in S. John's parish church, Aberdare, 3 August 1837, to Ann Morgan, a sister of **William Morgan** (1819 - 1878) and their early home at Ynyscynon, Aberdare, was the resort of poets and literary writers. Here their son, **Judge Gwilym Williams**, was born.

Alaw Goch died at Bridgend, 28 February 1863, and was buried in the Aberdare cemetery.

Author

Watkin William Price, (1873 - 1967)

Sources

T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen... from the earliest times to the present* (1908)

Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru (1870)

Josiah Thomas Jones, *Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol o Enwogion Cymru (Aberdâr 1867-70)*, ii, 612

Ben Morus, Enwogion Aberdâr

Gwaith Barddonol Alaw Goch (ed. Dafydd Morgannwg)

Y Gwladgarwr, which he helped to establish and maintained, 1858

Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, 7 and 14 March 1863

Y Geninen, 1900, 86

Cymru (O.M.E.), August 1904

Seren Gomer, October 1837, November 1858, and March 1920

The Principality, 29 March 1850

Y Darian, 18 August 1932

Charles Wilkins, *The South Wales Coal Trade and its Allied Industries, from the Earliest Days to The Present Time* (Cardiff 1888)

Further Reading

David Williams "Alaw Goch" 1809 - 1863, Cynon Culture website, viewed 3 July 2019

Neil Collins, *Alaw Goch was a valley legend*, WalesOnline website, viewed 3 July 2019

Wikipedia Article: David Williams

Additional Links

Wikidata: **Q16973316**

Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Price, W. W., (1959). WILLIAMS, DAVID (Alaw Goch; 1809 - 1863), coal-owner and eisteddfodwr. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 15 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-WILL-DAV-1809>

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