

WILLIAMS, WATKIN HEZEKIAH (Walcyn Wyn; 1844 - 1905), schoolmaster, poet, and preacher

Name: Watkin Hezekiah Williams
Pseudonym: Walcyn Wyn
Date of birth: 1844
Date of death: 1905
Spouse: Anne Williams (née Davies)
Spouse: Mary Williams (née Jones)
Parent: Ann Williams (née Williams)
Parent: Hezekiah Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: schoolmaster, poet, and preacher
Area of activity: Education; Eisteddfod; Poetry; Religion
Author: Brinley Rees

Son of Hezekiah Williams, who farmed Cwmgarw Ganol near Brynaman, and Ann, daughter of David Williams, Y Ddôl-gam, Cwmllynfell. Though born (7 March 1844) at Y Ddôl-gam, he spent his childhood at Cwmgarw. He had a few months at local schools before starting to work underground in a coal-mine at 8 years of age. A few odd weeks and months of schooling were added during the next five years, and this formal education was supplemented by the instruction which he received from his fellow-workers in the mines. He began to compete at eisteddfodau at an early age. He learned the rules of *cynghanedd* from [Gwydderig](#) (Richard Williams, 1842 - 1917) and other local poets, and he claimed the acquaintance of [Dafydd Morganwg](#), [Llew Llwyfo](#), and others whose interests were alien to his own, when he went to work in the Aberdare district. In 1870 he married Mary Jones, Y Trap, near Llandeilo; she died within a year leaving a three-weeks old child. Early in 1872 Walcyn Wyn left the mine to attend a school kept by Evan Williams, a relative, at Merthyr Tydfil; he eventually became an assistant teacher. In 1874 he entered a preparatory school, and afterwards spent four years at Carmarthen Presbyterian College with a view to entering the Congregational ministry. His second marriage in 1879, to Anne Davies of Carmarthen, was followed by a short period as an assistant in a preparatory school at Llangadog, but in 1880 he and one of his colleagues opened the ' Hope Academy ' at Ammanford; in 1884 the entire responsibility for the new school fell upon his shoulders. He built a new home in 1888 and thereafter the ' Gwynfryn School ' became well known as a seminary, for preachers particularly, about twenty students leaving annually to enter the colleges and professions.

Walcyn Wyn had a considerable reputation, during his lifetime, as a poet. He won the major awards at several of the chief eisteddfodau held between 1881 and 1893; he also wrote many shorter poems, both in serious and in lighter vein, particularly words to be set to music. A few of his hymns are still widely sung by Welsh congregations. He published several books of verse, [Caneuon Walcyn Wyn](#)^[E], 1871, *Hwyr Ddifyrion*, 1883, *Cân a Thelyn*, 1895, *Storiau Cymru*, *Caneuon y Safonau*, *Job* (drama), 1874, a translation of Moody and Sankey's latest hymns *Odlau'r Efengyl*, and a small book on Welsh literature, a short biography (1890) of [T. Penry Evans](#), and, in collaboration with Elwyn Thomas, two novels. He was a frequent contributor to Welsh periodicals and was himself, from 1890, co-editor of one of them (*Y Diwygiwr*). A small volume of his memoirs was published posthumously. His prose is racy and unaffected, but he made no great effort to develop a literary style. He was a prominent popular lecturer and preacher (he had been ordained in 1894). He had endured poor health for years before he died on 19 November 1905. He was buried in Gellimanwydd cemetery, Ammanford. A monument to him was erected by his students in the Gwynfryn chapel, and a memorial volume was written by [Pennar Griffiths](#). While Walcyn Wyn by no means achieved greatness as a poet, preacher, or scholar, his fund of witticisms, his sound common-sense, and his genial personality made him a well-loved national figure.

Author

Brinley Rees, (2001)

Sources

Y Diwygiwr, 1906, 1-27

Cymru (O.M.E.), 1906, 245-8

Adgofion Walcyn Wyn (Cardiff 1907), 1907

Pennar Griffiths, *Cofiant Walcyn Wyn. Gyda darluniau* (Cardiff 1915), 1915

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, supplement, 1901-11

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Watkin Hezekiah Williams](#)

Works

Watkin Hezekiah Williams, David Onllwyn Brace, Pennar Griffiths, *Byr-gofiant i'r diweddar Barch. T. Penry Evans, Pontardulais* (1890)

Additional Links

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