

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM (1781 - 1840), 'of Wern ', Independent minister

Name: William Williams

Date of birth: 1781

Date of death: 1840

Parent: William Probert

Gender: Male

Occupation: Independent minister

Area of activity: Religion

Author: Richard Griffith Owen

Born at Cwmhyswn-ganol, in the parish of Llanfachreth, Meirionnydd, in 1781 (christened 18 November 1781 in Llanfachreth church). His mother was a Calvinistic Methodist, but his father, William Probert, carpenter and small-holder, does not appear to have been a member of any religious organisation, although he was a man of sterling character. William was the sixth of seven children and had the reputation of being the most lively and mischievous boy in the neighbourhood. At the age of 13 he went to Bedd y Coedwr farm to hear ' [Peg-leg](#) ' Rhys Davies preach, was profoundly moved by his sermon, and from that day began to take an interest in religious matters. He now attended Pen-y-stryd chapel, where there was an Independent cause started by the congregation of the Old Chapel, Llanuwchllyn, and was admitted to full membership when he was only 15 years of age - an unusual thing in those days. He worked with his father as a carpenter for some time, but before he was 19 years of age began to preach, at the same time getting some elementary education from his minister, the Rev. William Jones, who taught him to write. He then went to school at Aberhafesp, near Newtown, for eight or nine months. In 1803 he was admitted as a student to the Wrexham Academy. Owing to his poor grounding, particularly in English, he made very little progress there, and there is a tradition that he jestingly assured his tutor, [Jenkin Lewis](#), that a more honest fellow than himself never left the Academy - having taken nothing from there. For all that, he was such an excellent preacher that more than one church was prepared to give him a call, and he chose the churches of Wern and Harwd near Wrexham, where he was ordained 28 October 1808. He threw himself into the work with all his energy and started new churches at Rhosllannerchrugog, Ruabon, and Llangollen. His reputation as a preacher spread throughout Wales and he became one of the leading men in his denomination. In 1834 he was one of the promoters of a movement, known as the ' General Union,' the object of which was to pay off the debts on the chapels. In 1836 he moved to the Tabernacle, Great Crosshall Street, Liverpool, but there was a lot of sickness in his family and his own health began to fail. On 20 October 1839 he returned to Wern, where he died 17 March 1840; he was buried in the chapel ground. Early in his career he abandoned the higher Calvinism and became a moderate Calvinist, in this respect following the example of [John Roberts](#) of Llanbryn-mair (1767 - 1834) and other Independent ministers; there is an article by him in the ' *Blue Book*' which was published by [John Roberts](#) and which caused a considerable amount of excitement at the time. He was, above all, a preacher, and it was as a preacher that he won such a prominent place in the life of Wales. His name is linked with those of [John Elias](#) and [Christmas Evans](#) as one of the 'three giants' of the Welsh pulpit. He transformed the style of preaching in his

denomination (which was then known as the ' Dry Dissenters') and left a permanent impression on its pulpit oratory. He had an attractive personality and remarkable eyes. His preaching was characterised by its clarity and freshness, and by the aptness of his similes and illustrations.

Author

Reverend Richard Griffith Owen, (1890 - 1973)

Sources

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Further Reading

Gwilym Hiraethog, *Cofiant y diweddar Barch. W. Williams o'r Wern* (Llanelli 1842)

Wikipedia Article: [William Williams of Wern](#)

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 4777E: 'The Pictorial Biography of the Reverend William Williams of Wern...'](#)

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