

WROTH, WILLIAM (1576 - 1641), Puritan cleric, and founder of the first Independent church in Wales

Name: William Wroth
Date of birth: 1576
Date of death: 1641
Gender: Male
Occupation: Puritan cleric, and founder of the first Independent church in Wales
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Thomas Richards

He was born in 1576; it is not yet known for certain whether he was a Wroth of Maindiff in Llandeilo Bertholau or one of the family of that name who had settled at Llangattock-juxta-Usk. He went to Oxford - his name is connected with three of the colleges - and graduated M.A. from Jesus, 1605. When exactly he became rector of Llanfaches is somewhat of a mystery, as there is much in documents at the Public Record Office in favour of 1611, and a good deal for 1617. Romantic stories are told about his transition from an indolent apathetic cleric to a Puritan of industry and zeal; it is possible that 1630 was the year of transformation, but there is no proof. It is said that he was a conscientious objector to the Book of Sports; whatever the exact reason was, he was summoned before the Court of High Commission in October 1635, and after much procedure of adjourning, charging, and rebutting, Wroth submitted to discipline in 1638; the most likely theory is that he surrendered the rectory in that year, as he describes himself in his last will (17 September 1638) as ' Preacher of God's Word ' and not ' rector of Llanfaches.' That will is a most interesting document, with the name of [Henry Walter](#) as chief executor, the signatures of the five witnesses and the bequest of three acres of land as an endowed charity to the poor of the parish for ever. It is open to no doubt that at this penultimate stage of his life he was busy gathering a dissident congregation outside the parish church, ' leading away many simple people,' for in November 1639 Henry Jessey, a prominent Puritan preacher, came down from London to form Wroth's followers into a regular church in the ' New England Way,' words used to describe a moderate quasi- Presbyterian mode of separation from the Church of England. Thus a church was formed, but no chapel was built (as was incorrectly held by [Sir Joseph Bradney](#)), a hybrid church at first, very probably of Baptists as well as Independents. It is no wonder when one remembers his irreproachable character, his simple evangelical preaching, his unique position as the first minister of the first Independent church in Wales, that some of his contemporaries called him an 'apostle' and looked upon Llanfaches as an Antioch amidst a gentile country. The Broadmead Records testify that he often came over to Bristol to preach, and add that it was Wroth's desire to leave this world before the trump of war sounded in the land. He had his desire; his will was proved at Llandaff in April 1641.

Author

Thomas Richards, (1878 - 1962)

Sources

Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire*, I, 201, 340; IV, ii, 189; iii, 343

Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*

Cardiff Naturalists' Society, XXV, ii, 6-7

Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey (1671), 1671, 9-10

Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Chas. I, 261, 268, 270, 274, 280, 287

Broadmead Records (1847, 1865), 9, 27, 29, 515

T. Richards, *Cymru a'r Uchel Gomisiwn, 1633-1640* (Liverpool 1930), 38-9

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1941, 157-68, 182-4

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Wroth](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q8020603](#)

Published date: 1959

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).

