

**Name:** William Sidney Gwynn Williams  
**Date of birth:** 1896  
**Date of death:** 1978  
**Spouse:** Elizabeth Eleanor Williams (née Davies)  
**Parent:** ? Williams (née Morgan)  
**Parent:** William Pencerdd Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** musician and administrator  
**Area of activity:** Music; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration  
**Author:** Rhidian Griffiths

Gwynn Williams was born at Plas Hafod, Llangollen on 4 April 1896, the son of W. Pencerdd Williams (1856-1924), a monumental mason who was also a musician and conductor of the Llangollen Choral Society. Gwynn's mother died before he reached the age of four. His father instructed him in tonic sol-fa, and he later became a Fellow of the Tonic Sol-fa College (FTSC). He qualified as a solicitor and joined the Wrexham firm of Emyr Williams, also working for the publishers Hughes and Son and editing the bilingual journal, *Y Cerddor Newydd* [The New Musician] from 1922 to 1929.

He took an early interest in the folk tradition and in 1933 was appointed Secretary of the Welsh Folk-Song Society. In 1946 he succeeded [J. Lloyd Williams](#) (1854-1945) as editor of the Society's journal, and in 1957 was elected Chairman. He was also President of the Welsh Folk Dance Society. In 1932 he published a pioneering study, *Welsh National Music and Dance*, and edited the short-lived periodical *Y Delyn* [The Harp], three issues of which appeared in 1947.

He was Music Director for the Gorsedd of the National Eisteddfod and Chairman of the Music Committee of the National Eisteddfod Council, and was created a Fellow of the National Eisteddfod. In 1947, following a suggestion made by the journalist Harold Tudor, he was one of the founders of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, and retained a close association with that Eisteddfod until his death.

He composed several songs which became popular, among them 'God knows', 'God's mercy', and 'My little Welsh home', and he edited volumes of traditional songs: *Old Welsh Folk Songs* (1927), *Caneuon Traddodiadol y Cymry/ Traditional Songs of the Welsh* (1961, 1963), *Un ar ddeg o Ganeuon Gwerin Cymru/Eleven Welsh folk-songs* (1958). In 1937 he founded the Gwynn Publishing Company, which published a large number of (mainly vocal) works by Welsh composers and works by European composers with Welsh words by such authors as [T. Gwynn Jones](#) and John Eilian (1904-1985). Gwynn Williams cherished a vision of a national school of Welsh composers who would draw their inspiration from the country's folk music, but also appreciated the international dimension in musical life.

In 1937 he married Elizabeth E. (Betty) Davies. Gwynn Williams died on 13 November 1978, and a memorial award was established in his memory in the field of Welsh folk music.

## Author

Rhidian Griffiths

## Sources

*Welsh Music*, 6/1 (1979)

*The Liverpool Daily Post*, 14 November 1978

## Further reading

[William Sidney Gwynn Williams \(1896-1978\)](#) From Warfare to Welfare website, viewed 30 May 2019

## Additional Links

NLW Archives: [W. S. Gwynn Williams Papers](#)

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