

NASH-WILLIAMS, VICTOR ERLE (1897 - 1955), archaeologist

Name: Victor Erle Nash-williams
Date of birth: 1897
Date of death: 1955
Spouse: Margaret Elizabeth Nash-Williams (née Luck)
Parent: Maude Rosetta Williams (née Nash)
Parent: Albert Henry Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: archaeologist
Area of activity: History and Culture
Author: George Counsell Boon

Born 21 August 1897 at Fleur-de-Lys, Monmouthshire, son of Albert Henry and Maude Rosetta (née Nash) Williams. The father, a monumental mason, died when the children were quite young, and his widow took by deed-poll the surname Nash-Williams. Victor was educated at Lewis' School, Pengam, and University College, Cardiff, graduating B.A. with first-class hon. in Latin, 1922; M.A., 1923; awarded D.Litt., 1939; elected F.S.A. 1930; served on the council of the Society, 1953-54; and also on the Council of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1932-35; president, Cambr. Arch. Assn., 1953-54, and editor of *Archæologia Cambrensis* 1950-55. He was nominated a member of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales in 1954, and a commissioner of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (Wales) in 1955. He served in both World Wars (infantry, 1915-19; R.A.S.C. and latterly as Major in the Historical Section of the War Office, 1940-45); among other interests, he took particular pride in his membership of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales. In 1931 he married Margaret Elizabeth, daughter of William Luck of Liverpool; they had two sons. He died 15 December 1955.

Nash-Williams spent his entire professional career in the service of the National Museum of Wales and of the University College, Cardiff. When Mortimer Wheeler whose early pupil he was, became director of the National Museum in 1924, Nash-Williams was offered the Assistant Keepership of the Department of Archaeology under **Cyril Fox**; and when **Fox** in his turn became Director, Nash-Williams became Keeper of the department and also lecturer in archaeology at the College, a post conjoint with the keepership since Wheeler's arrival in 1920; Nash-Williams, however, was destined to be the last holder of both positions. His interests lay mainly in the Roman and Early Christian periods. He was an enthusiastic and indefatigable excavator, having imbibed Wheeler's early teaching, but developing no further his best excavation-reports, thus, are his earliest - on Jenkins's Field and the Prysg Field, Caerleon, and on the baths, etc., and the defences of Caerwent. In connexion with Caerwent, he excavated at the Late Iron Age hillfort at Llanmelin and at Sudbrook promontory fort on the Severn coast; later, he re-excavated the Roman villa at Llantwit Major, and at the time of his death was engaged in an important series of 'digs' outside the legionary fortress of Caerleon. His earliest general publication in the Roman field was his *Catalogue of the Roman inscribed and sculptured stones found at Caerleon* (National Museum of Wales, 1935), in which his brother, Alva Harry, was co-author; his last such, *The Roman frontier in Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), 'severely factual' (**H.J. Randall**). In both these, he showed a decided ability to analyse, condense, and arrange diverse materials; and this character was exemplified to a greater and even more valuable extent in the one work of his which may justly be claimed to be a masterpiece, and into which the love and labour of many years, and the spiritual feeling of a devout Christian, also went: his *Early Christian monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950). The memorial inscription on bronze at the Legionary Museum of Caerleon, now facing the great imperial inscription of AD 100 which he himself discovered, ends with these lines:

He was gracious in life, exact in scholarship, fearless in advocating what he believed to be the truth, unflinching in friendship, and selflessly helpful to his colleagues, his staff, and his students.

Author

George Counsell Boon, (1927 - 1994)

Sources

Obit. notice by H. J. Randall, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, cv, 1956, 150-1

National Museum of Wales Annual Report, 1955-6, 12-13

Who was who?

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Victor Erle Nash-Williams](#)

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