

THOMAS, Sir WILLIAM JAMES (1867 - 1945), BARONET, coalowner, philanthropist

Name: William James Thomas
Date of birth: 1867
Date of death: 1945
Spouse: Maud Mary Thomas (née Cooper)
Parent: Jane Thomas
Parent: Thomas James Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: BARONET, coalowner, philanthropist
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Philanthropy
Author: Owen Picton Davies

Born 10 March 1867 at Caerphilly, Glamorganshire, son of Thomas James and Jane Thomas. Orphaned at an early age he was cared for by his paternal grandmother during his schooldays at Mynyddislwyn and Pontypridd. He then entered the service of his grandfather, James Thomas (1817 - 1901), a pioneer of the coal industry in the Rhondda Fach valley, who at the age of 60 sank the Standard and Ynyshir pits. He left the greater part of his fortune to his grandson who displayed business acumen in the management of the mines and great consideration for the workers' welfare. Sir William, who was a director of the Great Western Railway, the Barry Dock and Railway and other companies, disposed of his mining interests in 1914 to the United National Collieries Ltd.

Among his public gifts were £100,000 to the Welsh National school of Medicine, over £20,000 for the endowment of beds at the Cardiff Royal Infirmary, £5,000 to the Welsh National Memorial Anti-tuberculosis fund, £2,500 to the Welsh National Hospital for the treatment of wounded in World War I, and several thousand for other hospitals at Newport, Porth and Cardiff and for various religious causes.

He was knighted in 1914 and created baronet five years later. He was a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant for Glamorgan, High Sheriff in 1936 and member of the county council for many years. He became a Freeman of Cardiff in 1915, was awarded the honorary degree LL.D. by the University of Wales in 1931, and elected vice-president of the University College, Cardiff, in 1931.

He remained a member of Saron Welsh (Congl.) church, Ynyshir even after his removal to Cardiff. He married in 1917 Maud Mary, eldest daughter of George Cooper, of Bexhill-on-Sea and deputy matron of Cardiff Royal Infirmary. Sir William died 3 January 1945 and was buried at the Cardiff Cemetery.

Author

Owen Picton Davies, (1882 - 1970)

Sources

Western Mail, 4 January 1945

Elizabeth Phillips, *A history of the pioneers of the Welsh coalfield* (1925)

Who's who in Wales, (1937)

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