

THOMAS, WILLIAM PHILLIP ('Gwilym Rhondda'; 1861 - 1954), colliery official

Name: William Phillip Thomas
Pseudonym: Gwilym Rhondda
Date of birth: 1861
Date of death: 1954
Spouse: Elizabeth Thomas (née Devonald)
Parent: Mary Thomas (née Phillips)
Gender: Male
Occupation: colliery official
Area of activity: Business and Industry
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Born 27 October 1861, son of Mary Thomas (née Phillips) and her husband of Treorchy, Glamorganshire. In 1874 he left the local school at the age of 12 to commence work as an office-boy with the Ocean Coal Co.; he rose to become general manager in 1926, retiring in 1933. He was director of the company 1927-37, and of many other coal companies besides. He was well known as an organiser of social and cultural activities. He was received into the Gorsedd of Bards under the pseudonym ' Gwilym Rhondda ' at Cardiff national eisteddfod in 1883 for his literary and musical activities. He took an active part in religious affairs, being treasurer of the Welsh Baptist Association 1924-28, treasurer of the Union of Young Welsh Baptists, secretary of the Welsh Baptist Assembly of the Upper Rhondda District for more than 50 years and president of the Baptist Union in 1928-29. His great interest in the welfare of miners led him to organise very successful technical mining classes in the district. As secretary of Pentwyn hospital he organised the semi-national eisteddfod at Treorchy for 60 years, as well as drama festivals and other functions, in aid of the hospital. He served as J.P. and a member of Rhondda urban district council for over 25 years, being chairman 1913-14. He married, 1887, Elizabeth Devonald (died 7 August 1955). They had a son and two daughters and he retired to Hafod, Victoria Avenue, Porthcawl, Glamorganshire, where he died 2 August 1954 and was buried at Treorchy.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

The Baptist Union of Wales Handbook and Diary, 1955
Adroddiad Noddfa (Bedyddwyr), Treorci, 1943 and 1955
Western Mail, 3 August 1954
The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, Aberdâr
1871 census, RG 10/5384

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Published date: 2001

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