

WILLIAMS, ROBERT (Robert ap Gwilym Ddu; 1766 - 1850), poet

Name: Robert Williams
Pseudonym: Robert ap Gwilym Ddu
Date of birth: 1766
Date of death: 1850
Child: Jane Elizabeth Williams
Parent: Jane Williams (née Parry)
Parent: William Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet
Area of activity: Poetry; Religion
Author: Stephen Joseph Williams

Born 6 December 1766, only child of William Williams and Jane (Parry) of Betws Fawr, a farm in the parish of Llanystumdwy. He probably received the usual education at a local school and was taught the poet's craft by some of the Eifionydd poets. He spent the greater part of his life as a substantial farmer, and had sufficient leisure to pursue such interests as Welsh literature, theology, music, and antiquarian studies. His home became the resort of cultured Welshpeople, and he was known throughout North Wales not only as a poet but as a well-informed man of independent judgement. When he was about 50 years of age he married a young girl who was (probably) in service at a near-by mansion. They had one daughter, Jane Elizabeth, but she died in 1834 at the age of 17, and the elegy her father wrote for her is one of the most poignant in the language. Robert was friendly with the eisteddfodic poets, but after the one occasion when he failed to win the prize he never competed. He and [John Richard Jones](#) of Ramoth were staunch friends, and he assisted the latter to publish his hymn-books. His connection with [Dewi Wyn](#), his neighbour and former pupil, is commemorated in the name of a neighbouring chapel, 'Capel y Beirdd' - 'The Poets' Chapel.' He was, above all, a religious poet, and his poetry was in general inspired by his religious experiences; but he would never allow himself to be baptized and he was never a member of any church. Shortly before the end of his life he and his wife moved to a house called Mynachdy Bach, where he died 11 July 1850 at the age of 83. He was buried in Aber-erch churchyard, near Pwllheli. As a craftsman in the classical forms of poetry, Robert ap Gwilym Ddu carried on the tradition of the finest poets of the old dispensation, and some of his *englynion* are pure gems. He learned much from [Goronwy Owen](#), but he was also indebted to the traditions of his own neighbourhood. In his hymns he united the conciseness of the classical form with the lyrical vivacity of the 18th century. His best-known hymn is 'Mae'r gwaed a redodd ar y groes.'

Author

Professor Stephen Joseph Williams, (1896 - 1992)

Sources

Robert Williams, William Williams (ed.), *Gardd Eifion. Casgliad o Waith Barddonawl* (1841)

Robert Evans (ed.), *Lloffion yr "Ardd": barddoniaeth anghyhoeddedig Robert ab Gwilym Ddu, y bardd teuluaid* (Pwllheli 1911)

S. J. Williams, *Robert ap Gwilym Ddu* (Cardiff 1948)

Y Traethodydd, 1852

Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru (1870)

Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig (1889-96)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Robert Williams](#)

Images

William Roos, [Robert Williams Robert ap Gwilym Ddu o Eifion in his 83rd year, 1851](#)

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