

## RHYS-WILLIAMS, BRANDON MEREDITH (1927-1988), Conservative politician

**Name:** Brandon Meredith Rhys-williams

**Date of birth:** 1927

**Date of death:** 1988

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** Conservative politician

**Area of activity:** Politics, Government and Political Movements

**Author:** John Graham Jones

He was born on 14 November 1927, the son of **Sir Rhys Rhys Williams, Bart.**, (1865-1955) DSO, QC, who had served as the Liberal MP for the Banbury division from the general election of 1918 until the general election of 1922. He inherited his father's estate Miskin Manor in Glamorgan, which ran to some 800 acres, after which the baronetcy was named. His mother, **Juliet Rhys-Williams** (1898-1964), was also a Liberal Party politician who later joined the Conservative Party and became a prominent member of the Conservative Monday Club. She was well-known as an economist and a successful writer. He assumed the name of Rhys-Williams in lieu of Williams in 1938, and succeeded to the baronetcy on his father's death in 1955. He was educated at Eton and at Bolton Technical College, and served in the Welsh Guards, 1946-48, where he became a lieutenant. He was assistant director of the Spastics Society, 1962-63, and a consultant to Management Consultant Ltd., 1963-71. He had also worked with ICI Ltd. In 1967 he published *The New Social Contract*. Other publications include *More Power to the Shareholder?* (1969) and *Redistributing Income in a Free Society* (1969).

He stood unsuccessfully as the Conservative candidate for Pontypridd in the general election of 1959 and in the Ebbw Vale by-election of 1960 held on the death of **Aneurin Bevan** when he was predictably defeated by **Michael Foot** (Labour). He again contested the same division in the general election of October 1964. He then represented Kensington South, March 1968 (by-election)-February 1974, and Kensington and Chelsea from February 1974 until his premature death in 1988 aged sixty. Kensington South was one of the safest Conservative seats in the whole country, Kensington rather less so. In the 1968 by-election, he had been chosen from a short-list which included Christopher Soames and Geoffrey Howe, while in 1974 his rivals had included Tory hopefuls like Leon Brittan and Rhodes Boyson. He was a Member of the European Parliament from 1979 until 1984, representing the London South-East Euro-division. He was a member of the British Delegation to the Council of Europe, 1970-72, and to the European Parliament from 1973 where he became vice-chairman of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee. His majority in the 1987 general election was 4,447 in a six-cornered contest. He was regarded as one of the most independent and charming of MPs, and the foremost effective parliamentary champion of women, children and the poor. He was considered to be one of the old school of paternalistic Tories, ready at times to speak out against the party leadership. This ensured that he never won a place in the government. He wrote regularly to 'the Letters' columns of *The Times*. He had many interests in south Wales, including the presidency of the Welsh Guards Association in East Glamorgan.

He married in 1961 Caroline Susan, the eldest daughter of L. A. Foster of Greatham Manor, Pulborough, Sussex, and they had one son and two daughters. They lived at 32 Rawlings Street, London SW3, and at Gadairwen, Groes Faen near Pontyclun, Glamorgan. He died on 18 May 1988, after a long battle against leukaemia. He was buried at St David's Church, Groesfaen. His death led to the first by-election of the 1987-92 parliament. His successor in the baronetcy was his son, Arthur Gareth Ludovic Emrys Rhys-Williams (born 9 November 1961).

### Author

Dr John Graham Jones

### Sources

*Who was who?*

*Dod's Parliamentary Companion*

*The Times guide to the House of Commons 1987*

*Daily Post*, 19 May 1988

*The Guardian*, 19 May 1988

*The Times*, 19 May 1988

*Western Mail*, 19 May 1988

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