

CGS Pupil Judge Gwilym Williams, died March 31 1906



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Judge Gwilym Williams passed away on Sunday morning at his residence, Miskin Manor, Llantrisant, for some time His Honour had been in indifferent health, "Ni chel grudd gystudd calon". He was suffering from heart disease, and his ailment had of late been plainly written on his countenance. His last appearance in public was on Wednesday March 8th, at the County Court of Aberdare where nearly 67 years ago he first saw the light of day in a house in "Green Fach".

It was evident to all who saw the Judge on the day of the Court that he was far from well. When delivering his address to the jury in the Jackson versus Aberdare Public Hall case he appeared to be labouring under a great breathing difficulty. Several times during his oration did he gasp for breath, but the Judge was no shirker, even when raked with pain and breathless. It was a long tedious court, but he sat through. Alas few thought at the time that he would never occupy the judgement seat.

Judge Williams leaves a widow, three sons, and one daughter. One son Mr Rhys Williams is an eminent barrister on the Welsh circuit.

When Gwilym Williams was quite young his father removed to Ynyscynon Farm, Cwmbach, and afterwards built Ynyscynon House. Young Gwilym attended a school kept in Trecynon by the late Rev John Jones, Hen dy Cwrdd, the father of the Rev R.J. Jones, M.A.

When about 10 years of age the boy was sent to a private school kept by Mr Jason Petherick, commonly known as "The Hermit of Cefn Pennar". Among other useful things his tutor gave him some very practical lessons on economy in the expenditure of money, and the pocket money allotted to the boy by "The Hermit" was very limited. His Honour used to remark that this was, in a sense, fortunate, for the only shop in Mountain Ash at that time was the one kept by Mrs John Jenkins. From the "Hermitage" young Gwilym was sent to Cowbridge School, and thence to the

Swansea Normal College. His father being a colliery proprietor, the future Judge for many years acted as manager of some of his father's collieries before he decided to adopt the law as his profession. The knowledge of mining which he gleaned during those years proved of great value to him in after years when he was appointed County Court Judge. It was especially useful to him when dealing with compensation cases during recent years.

In 1863 he was called to the Bar, and for some years he practised on the South Wales circuit. In 1872 he was appointed the first Stipendiary Magistrate for the Pontypridd and Rhondda Division. In 1884, he was appointed to the County Court Judge of the Mid-Wales circuit, and a year later was appointed Glamorganshire County Court Judgeship, the position which he held until his death.

Judge Gwilym Williams was a unique personality. He was an exceptionally happy blend of the judge and the sage. His practical philosophy was as eminent as his judicial wisdom, Humorous as he was sometimes almost to a point of levity; he had nevertheless keen sense of the dignity of the Court. Woe unto the solicitor who would enter his Court un-bewigged and unrobed. On one occasion in Aberdare the Judge, in order to impress upon the advocates present the strict necessity of observing at all times the etiquette of the Court, fined himself because he through some accident, had perforce to appear in Court without the orthodox wig and gown. His fund of wit was inexhaustible and his repartee most brilliant. Some of his familiar epigrams are fast crystallising into proverbs.

He was exceedingly smart and bright even to the last. It was very, very seldom that his Honour would make a slip of the tongue, and he was exceedingly keen in detecting the slightest error made by advocate or witness. He had scant sympathy with those who, unwittingly often, would ignore the ceremonial observances of the court, and a stupid witness would oftentimes put his quick temper to a severe test. Nevertheless he was exceedingly patient while hearing the longest plaints. He would listen attentively and sum up carefully, bringing his long and varied experience and his extensive practical knowledge to bear on the subject at issue. His decisions were almost invariably accepted as having conscientious and fair. Impressionable and emotional as he was, he would never allow his feelings to run riot with his reason.



Dining Room Misken Manor

The Squire of Miskin was generous to a fault. He never forgot the rock from which he was hewn, and the companions of his boyhood, whatever their position in his life might be, would always receive from the Judge a friendly nod or smile of recognition and if necessary a helping hand. Every Court day at Aberdare on the playmates of his early days, who is now in abject poverty, might be seen in the vicinity of the Court Room, like the man who asked alms at the gate of the temple, waiting anxiously for the coming of the Judge from the railway station. Never did the Judge pass that way without handling the poor. Will a coin. For his generosity of heart a great many destitute people and meritorious institutions have a grateful use to remember the Squire of Miskin, and now they will bless his memory.

His practical religion, during the latter part of his life he attached himself to no religious denomination, although there was no more zealous devotee of an ethical creed than he. He was brought up a Calvinistic Methodist, and when a lad attended religious services at Libanus, Aberaman, Carmel Trecynon and Bethania Aberdare. Amongst his young fellow worshippers were Mr Roger Rogers, Llwydcoed, and Mr T.G. Davies, Aberdare, both of whom are now school attendance officers at Aberdare, and are respected deacons of the respective churches in Moriah, Llwydcoed and Bethania, Aberdare. The late Judge was a very practical moralist. In court and out of court, in season and out of season did he preach his doctrine of "Self Help" He was a kind of Welsh Smiles in wig and gown. Many people in the Aberdare Valley will not soon forget the very valuable lessons he drove home while lecturing on "Self Reliance" while in the County Court the judicial dignitary would often be lost in the Solonian sage, and he would deviate from the ruts of legal administration to deliver a useful homily on "The Evils of Credit", or to lecture too generous tradesmen, or reckless Co-operative Societies that would be drifting into the evils of the Credit System.

Ap Alaw Goch was a typical Welshman, patriotic to the core. His father being an ardent Eisteddfodwr, young Gwilym was cradled in patriotism, and imbibed the love of his native land with his mother's milk. It was true that he was not an eminent Welsh litterateur like Sir Marchant Williams. Neither did he enter the arena of Welsh politics. In fact it was difficult to say whether he was Liberal or Conservative. But he was, at any rate a warm-hearted and clear-handed Welshman loving his countrymen, and beloved by them. He had the warmest regard for the language of the land of his fathers, and his bilingual capabilities on the Judicial Bench, was a most valuable asset to Welsh Nationalism.

References at the Aberdare Police Court

At the Aberdare Police Court in Tuesday Sir T Marchant Williams, Stipendiary, got up and said that on behalf of himself and his colleagues he wished to point out the great loss which the country has sustained by the death of the late Judge Gwilym Williams.

The Judge had identified himself Aberdare all through his life, he was governed by the most generous sympathies and impulses, and was a man of sound common sense. He had a wonderful insight into character, and had a special knowledge of the characteristics of the common people, while his command over colloquial Welsh made his an excellent Judge, which virtue eminently qualified him to be a Stipendiary Magistrate previously. Public and official work appeared to be the very breath of his nostrils.

Had he considered his own interests and his own convenience more he would have been alive today, as Mr Arthur Lewis observed, his Honour wished to die at his post. He could never think of resigning, if he had resigned he would have died right away. Multitudes of friend were grieved to think that they would see him no more. He had been bound up with Aberdare particularly, and it was most appropriate that they should in Aberdare refer to the loss which his death involved.

Dr Davies, with visible emotion, observed that he had known Judge Williams for a period of 60 years, and had found him a good old friend. He wished to endorse every word that Sir Marchant had said. Col. Thomas Phillips, speaking on behalf of the solicitors, of whom a large number were present, said that he wished to associate himself with the sentiments already expressed. When he spoke of Judge Williams as a friend he used the word in its fullest sense. The late Judge had a long and varied experience in all phases of life. He possessed a very profound knowledge of his countrymen. He could probe into their inner life and dive into the depth of human nature. He had found him most kind and considerate to young members of the legal profession. He could be firm and sometimes would censure severely, but there was under a stern surface an under-current of tenderness. Honorable (Mr Phillips) remembered the time when thirty years ago, the departed first made his appearance as Stipendiary Magistrate. It was a pathetic coincidence that he should make his last public appearance in Aberdare, the town of his birth and boyhood. He loved Aberdare intensely, and they as citizens of Aberdare mourned the loss of a most genial friend.

Mr D.M. Richard said that as the oldest pressman present he would like to add one word to the references made to the late Judge. He was a most pains-taking character. As one who sat in that court so long, he (Mr Richards) could well testify to the patient and pain-staking manner in which his Honour discharged his judicial duties. He would like to offer that tribute on behalf of the people of Aberdare.



Mountain Ash Council's Sympathy

At the Mountain Ash Council on Tuesday, the Chairman Capt. F.N. Gray, proposed a vote of condolence with the widow and children of the late judge. The deceased, said Mr Gray, had been intimately connected with that district, and he was in many ways an ardent supporter of Welsh aspirations. Mr J. Powell, in seconding said he sincerely regretted the necessity for such a vote. He was sure they all felt grieved at what they might term his early demise. The late Judge had done much in bringing about a better feeling among all classes of people, and in maintaining the sentiment of the Welsh people. He had always stood for what was best in Welsh sentiment, what was always worth maintaining. The vote was passes, all the members rising to their feet.

Grave of Judge Gwilym Williams