

ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL / ANNUAL REPORT 1909

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

At the meeting held on the 11th December, 1908, Sir John Williams informed the Council that he proposed to hand over his collections of books and manuscripts forthwith to the National Library, and requested the Council to make arrangements for checking and packing the contents. Mr Richard Ellis, MA, Librarian of the Welsh Library at the University College of Wales, was engaged as a temporary assistant for this purpose, and proceeded to Llanstephan.

The Report of the Librarian on Sir John Williams's Library, printed later, gives detailed information with regard to this valuable Library, and its removal.

Meanwhile, the work of fitting up the Assembly Rooms as a temporary building for the Library was proceeded with. Steel book stacks, supplied by Messrs Lucy and Co., of Oxford, with easily adjustable shelving, were fixed in bays across the floor of the large room and in the fireproof strong room. The book cases belonging to the Welsh Library at the College, lent to the National Library for so long as it remains in the temporary building, were arranged around the walls, while the south end of the large room has been fitted with the bookcases from Plas Llanstephan, presented by Sir John Williams, this portion of the building being used for his Library.

The storage space thus provided will accommodate about 80,000 volumes, and, if required, bookcases for a further 25,000 to 30,000 volumes can be provided in other parts of the building.

RICHARD WILLIAMS

1909001

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Mr David Davies MP, Llandinam

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

"During the course of the year several gifts have been made to the National Library, the chief one, however, being that of the Library of the late Mr Richard Williams of Newtown, which was presented by Mr David Davies MP, Llandinam. Mr Richard Williams had already in his lifetime bequeathed the manuscripts and a few of the books to the National Library, but the portion remaining over, purchased by Mr David Davies, will be very valuable to all students of Welsh Literature, as it contains complete sets of the Welsh Historical and Archaeological Periodicals, as well as a very representative collection of Old Welsh Printed Literature."

Mynegai

Y Drenewydd.

SIR JOHN WILLIAMS

1909002

Statws / Status

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

1909003

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth
Blwyddyn / Year
Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909
Disgrifiad / Description

The collection hitherto kept at the University College, as a nucleus for the National Library, were transferred at the beginning of February. This was done in accordance with the undertaking given by the College Authorities in the following terms:- "In order to carry out the objects of the original promoters of the Welsh Library now at Aberystwyth, and of those who have assisted in its development on national lines, the College authorities have resolved and are prepared to transfer to the National Library such portions of the existing library as may be judged rightly to belong to the National Library as distinguished from the working library of the Welsh Department of the University College, subject only to the condition that the Library is to be located and to remain at Aberystwyth."

The Welsh Library of the College (NLW MSS 641-99), included the following collections:-
A copy of bishop William Morgan's Bible, 1588, presented to the College in the year 1872 by Rev. W M Lewis, Ty Llwyd, Pembrokeshire, being the first book given as a contribution towards a Welsh collection, with a suggestion that a national repository for rare and valuable Welsh books was desirable.

The MSS of William Floyd, 534 volumes (NLW MSS 3641-4258).

MSS, mainly of the 17th century, presented by Dr T C Edwards, first Principal of the College.

The MSS and Books of the Rev. Walter Davies ("Gwallter Mechain") (NLW MSS 1641-1812, 1950-2).

The Welsh Library of the Rev. Owen Jones, BA, Llansaintffraid (NLW MSS 2641-79).

The Books and MSS. of Lewis Morris of Penbryn, bequeathed to the National Library by his descendant, the late Sir Lewis Morris, Knt, MA. (NLW MSS 600-8)

The MSS, Autograph Letters and Books bequeathed by Mr Richard Williams of Celynog (NLW MSS 527-92), including the copy of Y Bibl Bach (1630), which belonged to Vavasor Powell, the Welsh Bible of 1620, and Llyfr Homiliau (1606).

The "Celynog" Library, purchased and presented by David Davies, Esq., MP.

A collection of Books and MSS presented by Mrs Busch of Crosswood, to be called the "Frances Althea Trevor" Collection (NLW MSS 1887-1949).

The general Welsh Library of the College (except the working portion reserved for students of the College), including numerous gifts made from time to time by various donors.

Mynegai

Llansteffan, Thomas Charles Edwards, Trawsgoed.

HENGWRT AND PENIARTH MANUSCRIPTS

1909004

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The transfer of the collections already referred to was hardly complete when, through the death of Mr William Robert Maurice Wynne of Peniarth, the manuscripts known as the Hengwrt and Peniarth Collection became available for the National Library. These important manuscripts which for just half a century have been kept with care and pride at Peniarth, the ancestral home of the Wynnes in Merionethshire, are now, through the generosity of Sir John Williams, Bart, public property. The manuscripts were removed to the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, on 20 February 1909. Before removal they were carefully checked by Mr Halsey and Mr J H Davies (two of the Trustees under the deed of assignment), by Dr John Gwenogvryn Evans, and the Librarian. Every manuscript was again carefully checked and collated after removal to the Library.

It may be convenient to recite briefly the circumstances under which these MSS have become the property of the National Library. By a deed dated the 28th February 1905, between Mr W R M Wynne and Sir John Williams, Bart, it was agreed, in consideration of a sum of money paid by Sir

John Williams, that, subject to certain reservations, the Peniarth Collection of MSS should, on the death of the survivor of Mr W R M Wynne and his brother, Mr O S Wynne, become the property of the National Library of Wales. Mr Owen Slaney Wynne predeceased his brother, the death of Mr W R M Wynne completed the reservations upon the trust, and the MSS accordingly became the property of the National Library. The MSS have to be placed in a fireproof room or building, and kept separate and distinct, under the name of "The Hengwrt and Peniarth Collection of Manuscripts".

Mrs Wynne of Peniarth subsequently expressed her desire to present to the Library the bookcase in which the manuscripts have hitherto been kept. The bookcase, a very handsome one, was made from a large ilex tree which grew near the house at Peniarth, and which was blown down during a gale which also caused the wreck of the Royal Charter off the Anglesey coast. A year later the Hengwrt MSS came into the possession of Mr W W E Wynne, and he had the ilex tree sawn up, and from it the bookcase was made, all the work, except the decorative scrolls on the doors of the lower tier of cupboards, being done by the estate workmen. The bookcase was removed from Peniarth to the National Library on 2 May 1909, and has been placed in the President's room pending the erection of the permanent building.

The history of the collection is interesting. The story begins with Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt, born 1592, died 1666, a man of scholarly tastes, educated at Oxford, with a leaning to antiquarian and genealogical pursuits, the friend and correspondent of such men as John Selden and Archbishop Usher. His tastes naturally led him to collect the manuscripts of the early Welsh writers and others, which, through the break-up of the monasteries, and the disruptions of the Civil War, were in considerable danger of perishing. The Peniarth collection is made up of over 500 manuscripts in Welsh, Cornish, English and Latin, and of these rather more than four-fifths were in the Hengwrt Library, and, except for a few additions made by his descendants, were brought together by Robert Vaughan.

The manuscripts remained in the family up to the death of Sir Robert Williams Vaughan, Bart, of Nannau, Hengwrt and Rûg, who bequeathed them to his great friend, Mr W W E Wynne, of Peniarth, and on his death they passed to his oldest son, the late Mr W R M Wynne. There being no direct heir, Mr W R M Wynne in 1905 sold the manuscripts to Sir John Williams, subject to the life interest of himself and his brother, Mr Owen Slaney Wynne, on condition that they were to become the property of the National Library of Wales if established at Aberystwyth. Mr Owen Slaney Wynne died before his brother, and on the death of Mr W R M Wynne in January 1909, the manuscripts passed to the National Library.

The Welsh MSS in the collection have been fully described in Reports prepared for the Historical MSS Commission, by Mr John Gwenogvryn Evans, MA, DLitt, who says the collection is "undoubtedly the premier collection of Welsh manuscripts, both in extent and quality. Here we have the oldest MSS of the Laws of Wales in Latin and Welsh; the oldest versions of the Mabinogion, as well as of the Arthurian and other Romances; the oldest and only perfect copy of the Holy Grail; an early translation of a portion of the Gospel of Matthew; an immense body of poetry, ranging from the Black Book of Carmarthen down to the 18th century; historical works like the Brut y Tywysogion; and a large number of the theological works current in the Middle Ages. We have here also not only the most extensive collection of pedigrees, but by far the oldest manuscripts with authentic contemporary accounts and references to sources of information."

Again, writing of Robert Vaughan, Dr Gwenogvryn Evans says:- "No student can refrain from paying him a most sincere tribute of admiration and gratitude for his prescience and skill in bringing together the noblest monuments of Kymric history and literature. Though it is true that his collection of Welsh MSS is the finest in existence, still his merit was not in making it the biggest collection, but in securing nearly every manuscript of importance in the language, leaving transcripts to others."

THE BLACK BOOK OF CARMARTHEN (Peniarth 1B)

The "Black Book of Carmarthen" is the glory of the Hengwrt Library, as indeed it would be of any library possessing it, for it is the oldest MS in the Welsh language, and one of the MSS denominated the "Four Ancient Books of Wales". It is on vellum, and written in several hands of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the oldest portions being at least as early as 1195. The Priory of St John at Carmarthen was founded for Black Canons about the year 1148, and in its Scriptorium the Black Book was compiled or copied, it is hard to decide which, for some of the compositions belong to an earlier

age. The poems are a compound of Mythology, Religion, History and Literature. The first poem in the MS. is a dialogue between Myrddin and Taliesin, the subject being the battle of Arvderydd. The text of the Black Book has been ably reproduced with an introduction by Dr Gwenogvryn Evans - (Pwllheli, 1907).

THE BLACK BOOK OF TALIESIN (Peniarth 2B)

Another of the "Four Ancient Books" is also in the collection, "The Black Book of Taliesin", written on vellum, probably at Neath or Margam, circa 1275, and containing the poems attributed to the Welsh Bard, Taliesin, the subject of much controversy in the middle of the 19th century. Thomas Stephens of Merthyr and Professor Skene have, unfortunately, not lived to see the day when this and other MSS in which they were keenly interested are available for research workers, but the opportunity of studying the original of this precious MS will attract other scholars to the National Library. A facsimile of this MS will be included in the Series of Old Welsh Texts, prepared by Dr Gwenogvryn Evans.

THE WHITE BOOK OF RODERICK (Peniarth 4&5)

Of first importance amongst literary manuscripts is the "Llyvyr Gwyn Rhydderch", or the White Book of Roderick, containing the Mabinogion and other Romances, copied in several hands of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Mabinogion stories in the White Book are earlier than the same stories in the Red Book of Hergest, and there is internal evidence that the scribe of the Red Book either used this MS. or that both may have been transcribed from an earlier original now lost. The White Book also contains the Charlemagne cycle of stories, Bown of Hampton, the Purgatory of Patrick, the Gospel of Nicodemus, an account of a series of miracles wrought by the Blessed Virgin and St Edmund of Canterbury, the history of Pilate and Judas, and several other pieces of mediaeval literature in Welsh.

Among the older Welsh MSS described in Dr Gwenogvryn Evans' Report is the MS containing the odes of Kynddelw, Kyvoesi Merlin, and other pieces, written partly between 1230 and 1250, and partly about 1300, and one a little earlier, circa 1225, with fragments of the Mabinogion, and the Romance of Geraint ap Erbin (Peniarth 6B).

Another MS gives the Romances of Peredur and Charlemagne and the "histories" of Adam, the Crucifixion, Pilate and Judas Iscariot, transcribed in the fourteenth century (Peniarth 7C); another transcript of the Charlemagne romance belongs to the same period, and yet another to a somewhat later date (Peniarth 8-10B).

YSTORYAEU SEINT GREAL

The gem, however, of the romance series is the Ystoryaeu Seint Greal (see illustration), a noble volume, on 280 leaves of fine vellum, written sometime before 1400, strongly bound in leather, with clasps (Peniarth 11B). This MS was printed under the supervision of Rev. Robert Williams of Rhydycroesau in 1876. The opportunity of consulting the original will be a boon to scholars engaged in the study of romance literature.

THE LAWS OF HYWEL DDA

In MSS containing the Laws of Hywel Dda the collection is very rich, there being altogether 23 copies. A few of these, it should be stated, are partial transcripts. MS 29, Y Llyvr Du o'r Waun, or the Black Book of Chirk, is the oldest copy of the Laws in Welsh, and MS 28, a Latin version written in the last quarter of the twelfth century, is the oldest of all existing transcripts. This MS has numerous illustrations of great historical value. MS 31, an early fourteenth century copy, is remarkable for the ornamental bordering enclosing the writing of the first page, a decoration which Dr Evans considers unique in the case of Welsh MSS. Besides the one just mentioned, there is another of the fourteenth century, while five belong to the thirteenth. There are two seventeenth century transcripts, one being in the hand of John Jones, Gelly Lyvdy [Gellilyfdy], and the other in the autograph of Robert Vaughan.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH'S HISTORIA

In the collection are two Latin MSS of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia, one of them being of the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

BRUT Y BRENHINOEDD

There are numerous copies of Brut y Brenhinoedd. Of the Bruts, two belong to the thirteenth century. A late fifteenth-century Brut is interesting in that it is ornamented with large rubric initials and coloured illustrations of the kings mentioned in the text, from Encas to Cadwaladyr Vendigeit. A late MS of the brut is in the autograph of William Kynwal, another was written by Dr. John David Rhys. Four are in the hand of John Jones, Gellilyfdy, three having been written while he was a prisoner in the Fleet.

BRUT Y TYWYSOGION

There are several MSS of Brut y Tywysogion, the earliest of which belongs to the first quarter of the fourteenth century. A MS written circa 1400 is, in Dr Evans's opinion, a direct transcript of the Brut in the Red Book of Hergest, and another copy has paragraphs not to be found in the Llyfr Coch. A sixteenth-century transcript is in the autograph of William Kynwal. To the same period belongs a copy which was once in the possession of Thomas Wilkins, a seventeenth-century antiquary, who owned Llyfr Coch Hergest, Llyvyr Agkyr, and other valuable MSS.

JOHN JONES, GELLILYFDY MANUSCRIPTS

The collection contains over forty manuscripts in the autograph of John Jones of Gelli Lyvdy, who was the friend and contemporary of Robert Vaughan, to whom John Jones bequeathed his MSS. Unknown, save to a few specialists, and not even accorded a place in the "Dictionary of National Biography", John Jones of Gelli Lyvdy was remarkable for many things, and Wales owes him a great debt for his skill and industry in copying manuscripts, many of which survive only in his transcripts. He excelled as a penman, writing his texts with a fine hand, and embellishing them with capitals and head and tail-pieces which are really beautiful. His life-story presents points of interest amounting to romance. Bred up to the law as an Attorney in the Court of the Marches, he early withdrew himself from practising because, so it is stated, he had too much honesty to pursue it. Possessed of sufficient private means in early life to make the following of his profession a matter of choice rather than necessity, he nevertheless spent a large part of his life in the Fleet Prison in London, though this did not interrupt the work of copying; many of his transcripts bear notes of their being written while he was a prisoner. His tastes were catholic to a degree. The copying of MSS must have been the absorbing passion of his life. He seems to have copied every MS he could get hold of, whatever the subject. Hence it is that he has left in his transcripts a mine where students of Welsh poetry, history, genealogy and many other subjects may delve. In one MS we may find pedigrees of the half mythical kings and saints, in another an interlude, here a mediaeval religious paraphrase of the Crucifixion or the finding of the cross, and there the travels of Sir John Mandeville, a copy of an early Calendar, or of the Laws of Hywel Dda. Numerous as are the manuscripts of John Jones in the Peniarth Library, there are nearly as many more in other collections. Many are bulky tomes of 800 to 1,000 pages, often folios. It will be seen, therefore, that his industry was prodigious.

SIR THOMAS WILLIAMS OF TREFRIW MANUSCRIPTS

The manuscripts in the autograph of Sir Thomas Williams of Trefriw reveal another instance of devotion to Welsh studies, pursued in the face of innumerable difficulties, and a constant struggle with poverty and bad health. Dr Gwenogvryn Evans says there is no more pathetic case in literature than that of Sir Thomas Williams, who graduated MA at Oxford in 1573, in which year he was a curate at Trefriw. A near neighbour of William Salesbury, the first translator of the New Testament into Welsh, Williams was drawn to Salesbury's favourite studies, and devoted the remaining thirty-four years of his life to compiling and illustrating by quotation a dictionary of Latin-Welsh and Welsh-Latin. The Latin-Welsh part of the work is in the Peniarth collection, a bulky work in three volumes, representing an enormous amount of industry which has never met with its due need of recognition. On this work is based the Dictionary of Dr John Davies of Mallwyd, printed in 1632, but the printed book is an abridgement of the original, which yet awaits the enterprise of some rich society or private patron. The Welsh-Latin portion, though not in the Peniarth collection, still survives.

Other manuscripts of the same hand are a commonplace book in which are written numerous notes and quotations for the Dictionary; and a miscellaneous collection containing a copy of the Laws extracted from the White Book of Hergest, Charters relating to Anglesey, Carnarvon, Merioneth and Bardsey, Poetry, Lives of the Saints, etc.

COURT OF THE MARCHES

It is impossible in a brief report to describe the innumerable documents and other materials for elucidating the history, topography, genealogy, land tenure and other matters relating to Wales or parts thereof. One volume, for example, contains copies of papers dealing with the Court of the Marches in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and the jurisdiction of that court over the counties of Worcester, Gloucester, Monmouth and Salop, with observations here and there upon the arguments by Sir Francis Bacon.

CORNISH MANUSCRIPTS

There are two MSS in the Cornish language, one being of exceptional importance, a Cornish mystery, written in 1504, of which this is the only text extant. It was edited and translated by the late Dr Whitley Stokes in 1872. The discovery of this manuscript amongst the Peniarth collection about the year 1869 created quite a stir among philologists, Cornish being represented by a very limited written literature, to which this drama was an important addition, especially as a record of the state of the language at the end of the fifteenth century.

LATIN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH MANUSCRIPTS

The Hengwrt and Peniarth collection includes about 200 MSS in Latin, English and French, some being of considerable value and importance. There is one, for instance, of the thirteenth century, closely and beautifully written, containing a number of letters and charters relating to the monastery of Burton-upon-Trent, and in the same volume is a collection of letters and charters of the Saxon kings of England. There is a folio MS on vellum of the Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon, which is quite one of the oldest, if not the oldest, text of that Chronicle, and also an early MS of Bede. Both these are small folios, on vellum, with rubricated capitals throughout, and the Bede has a good illuminated initial letter.

Among other MSS in English may be mentioned a transcript of Sir Philip Sidney's translation of the Psalms, and a little volume with regulations for royal and other funerals, processions, etc., including the programme of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth.

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES (Peniarth 392D)

Of the English MSS, however, interest centres most on the MS of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, a folio, on vellum, of about 1420 it is conjectured. This fine volume, three inches thick, has had a bad time with rats or mice, the top being freely nibbled away, yet the text of the MS has almost entirely escaped injury. Either the rats did not relish the ink, or some scholar or housewife came to the rescue in the nick of time. Professor Skeat writes of this MS as follows: "The Hengwrt MS of the Canterbury Tales is known to be one of the best. It stands second among the seven MSS selected and printed by the Chaucer Society. An examination of its contents shows that it is unique, not only in the arrangement of the Tales, but in particulars relating to the Tales themselves."

From the monastery of Evesham came a curious and interesting volume on vellum containing tracts on astrology, the "Secretum Secretorum" of Aristotle, and other pieces; while some religious house or institution may have been the original owner of a pretty volume bound in oak boards and neatly covered with stamped leather, containing the "Consuetudinary of Sarum". A tract in English by John Alcock, bishop of Ely, in the fifteenth century, bears the quaint title "This is ye Abbey of ye holy gost yt is fonded in a place yt is cleped ye consciens."

Astrology, Astronomy and Arithmetic are represented by several manuscripts, some of them very curious. Science, in the middle ages, was mainly concerned with the first two branches, arithmetic as a subject of education, coming somewhat later. The state of the science of arithmetic in the sixteenth century can be gleaned from the title of one little manuscript, "The Arte of Arithmeeticke set fourth by John Martine, Siliceus, and devided into two partes, that is unto speculation or theoricall and the other unto practicall arithmeticke; Very profitable to all kinde of men and allso necessary to be read and learned." The date of this is somewhere about 1600. Other treatises on arithmetic of slightly earlier date are in the collection.

This very inadequate summary necessarily leaves unmentioned many important MSS. To do justice to the collection would require time and research, and involve writing, not a report, but a book. The Report on the collection published by the Historical MSS in the Welsh language, fills 1,130 pages.

The two parts of this valuable Report can be obtained from the King's Printers for three shillings and seven pence.

In making this noble collection of Manuscripts the property of the National Library of Wales Sir John Williams has fittingly crowned his other great gifts to the Nation.

Mynegai

Rhydychen, Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin, Castell-nedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Merthyr Tudful, Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch, Cynddelw, Llyfr Du o'r Waun, Llyfr Du Castell y Waun, Gellilyfdy, Sieffre o Fynwy, Llyfr Coch Hergest, Thomas Williams, Trefriw, Llyfr Gwyn Hergest, Sir Fôn, Sir Gaernarfon, Caernarvonshire, Sir Feirionnydd, Swydd Gaerloyw, Sir Fynwy, Cernyweg.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES DESIGNS

1909005

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Six sets of designs were received from the Architects selected for the limited competition to secure an Architect for the permanent building.

The assessor nominated by the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects was Mr Reginald Bolmfield, ARA, Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy. Professor Blomfield has visited Aberystwyth to examine the plans in consultation with the President and Librarian, as provided in the programme of the competition, and the award will be submitted to the Council at the annual meeting on May 28th.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

1909006

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Newspaper proprietors

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

A large number of proprietors of newspapers and periodicals in Wales and the Border Counties have generously agreed to contribute a copy of each issue for the purpose of being filed in the Library (Dept of Printed Books). It is hoped that ultimately every periodical publication issued in Wales, as well as those in other Celtic languages, will be so filed. All these will be bound from time to time and preserved for reference. A list of those at present received is given in an Appendix to this Report.

PRINTS AND DRAWINGS

1909007

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

A beginning has been made with a Department of Prints and Drawings. This will include original drawings, engraved prints, photographs, picture postcards, and every other form of graphic delineation of matters concerning Wales and the Border Counties. Portraits of men and women, not only celebrities, but racial types and interesting characters; views of scenery, buildings, towns and villages, places of worship, bridges, and any other topographical pictures; illustrations of natural history, geology, domestic life, the arts and industries, customs, games, pastimes, religious observances, the Gorsedd, the Eisteddfod, and other national gatherings; all these and many other phases of Wales and Welsh life should be represented in this department. The pictures need not necessarily be of value as works of art, so long as they illustrate the subject. The collections in this department will be mounted,

and arranged according to subject. The value of such a collection for reference will be great, and become of increasing importance.

COURTS OF GREAT SESSIONS IN WALES

1909008

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Public Record Office

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Arrangements have been made whereby certain documents relating to Wales, now in the Public Record Office, will be transferred to the National Library. The following letter has been received from the Public Record Office:-

"I have the honour to enclose two copies of a Schedule of Documents connected with the Courts of Great Sessions in Wales which can now be acted upon, and which enables the Master of the Rolls to offer to the Governors of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, for preservation therein, all or any of the classes of documents specified, and I am to ask you to be good enough to submit the Schedule to the Court of Governors at their next meeting with the request that they will signify their decision as to their acceptance or otherwise of the documents in question. Most of the classes can be at once despatched, and information will be given when the remainder are ready for transmission."

Mynegai

Yr Archifdy Gwladol, Llysoedd y Sesiwn Fawr.

DAVIES, COMPTON HOUSE

1909009

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Mr Evan D Jones, JP

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Mr Evan D Jones, JP, has purchased and presented the Library of the late Mr Davies, Compton House, Aberaeron, which contains some rare books and pamphlets and a few manuscripts (NLW MSS 609-11A, 612-15B, 616-20D, 621-3C) including a Register of the Aberayron Club, 1785 to 1856 (NLW MSS 616-17D), and a Register of the Religious Society of Llanddewi Aberarth, 1812 to 1826 (NLW MS 613B). The preservation of these records in the National Library is very desirable, and it would be an excellent thing if those who are in possession of such things would send them to the Librarian.

Mynegai

Aberaeron.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF PEMBROKESHIRE

1909010

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Dr Henry Owen

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

A valuable volume, containing the Archaeological Survey of Pembrokeshire, prepared by Henry Owen, Esq., DCL, and Edward Laws, Esq., FSA, was presented by Dr Henry Owen (Dept of Printed Books).

Mynegai

Sir Benfro.

LEWIS HOPKIN

1909011

Statws / Status

Rhoddd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Rev. Lemuel James, MA

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

An interesting addition is a small collection of books which belonged to Lewis Hopkin, the poet, author of "Y Fel Gafod", and other works, and a member of the same family as "Wil Hopcyn", the lover of the Maid of Cefn Ydfa (Dept of Printed Books). For these, the Library is indebted to Rev. Lemuel James, MA, Vicar of Ystrad Mynach.

BRITISH MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS

1909012

Statws / Status

Rhoddd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

The British Museum

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

By the direction of the Council, an application was made to the Trustees of the British Museum, who generously presented to the Library all their publications (Dept of Printed Books). The following letter was received from the Principal Librarian (Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, KCB, DCL, etc.):-

"I beg to inform you that I have laid your letter of the 16th March before the Trustees of the British Museum, and I am directed by them to assure you that they have great pleasure in acceding to your request, and that copies of their publications, as far as they are available, will be presented and transmitted to the National Library of Wales forthwith."

Mynegai

Yr Amgueddfa Brydeinig.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PUBLICATIONS

1909013

Statws / Status

Rhoddd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

The Librarian of Congress, Washington (Herbert Putnam Esq.)

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

In response to a similar application the Librarian of Congress, Washington (Herbert Putnam, Esq.), has sent a complete set (78 volumes) of the publications of that Library (Dept of Printed Books).

CLARENDON PRESS PUBLICATIONS

1909014

Statws / Status

Rhoddd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

The University of Oxford

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The University of Oxford has promised to present books to the value of £100 from the publications of the Clarendon Press (Dept of Printed Books).

ANONYMOUS GIFTS

1909015

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The Library has also received a number of gifts from various donors, and the Council confidently appeals to all who have the best interests of Wales at heart for further contributions. All gifts received are duly credited to the donor in the official register of gifts, and in the volumes presented. A list of donors is given in the Appendix.

LLANSTEPHAN MANUSCRIPTS: The Shirburn Library.

1909018

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The Library of Sir John Williams, which has now been transferred to the National Library, was the first collection to be actually placed here, though others were removed as soon as the work of fitting up the bookcases was completed.

For the greater part of his life Sir John has had visions of a great Library for Wales, and, happily, has lived to see his dreams realised. To their realisation he has himself been the chief contributor, not only by the gift of his own Library, but also by his persistent efforts to bring about the establishment of a Library on a national basis, supported by an annual contribution from the Government.

The Shirburn Collection of Welsh books and manuscripts is the most valuable addition which Sir John Williams made to the Library at Llanstephan. For 150 years these valuable books remained undisturbed in the possession of the Earls of Macclesfield at Shirburn Castle, Oxfordshire, down to 1899, when they were sold. The collection was formed between 1690 and 1740 by Rev. Samuel Williams, a Cardiganshire Vicar of Devynock in Breconshire, who was a Fellow of the Royal Society and an eminent man of letters. On the death of Moses Williams, his library was sold by his widow to William Jones, FRS (father of Sir William Jones, the Oriental scholar), who bequeathed it, with his own library, to the second Earl of Macclesfield in 1749.

Richard Morris, brother of Lewis Morris o Fôn, was familiar with the Shirburn Collection. He was well acquainted with William Jones, the mathematician, one of the former owners of the Collection, and was employed by him to index the MSS. In this way he acquired an intimate knowledge of their contents, and in later years, after the MSS had become the property of the Earl of Macclesfield, he and his brother Lewis made repeated efforts to see and transcribe them. The Earl, however, though himself a distinguished scholar, could not see his way to agree to their requests and the manuscripts remained in the unopened boxes in which they had been received. The brothers Lewis and Richard Morris, in writing to one another, continually refer to the Collection, and express the hope that the Earl would present them to the British Museum. Fifty years later Hugh Maurice, nephew of Owen Jones, the London furrier, who published the *Myvyrian Archaeology*, obtained permission to copy some of the manuscripts, and these copies were secured for the British Museum a few years ago. From 1804 up to recent times they were not inspected by any Welshman until Mr Egerton Phillimore and Dr Gwenogvryn Evans, through the kindness of the late Earl of Macclesfield, were given access to them.

The manuscripts are 154 in number. Many of them have been described fully in the Report on Welsh MSS, Vol. II., Part II., prepared for the Historical MSS Commission by Dr J Gwenogvryn Evans. They include MSS in Welsh and Cornish of great value. One of the most valuable MSS is the earliest Welsh translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, which was written between 1225 and 1250, a time when Wales was still under the authority of its native Princes. Another interesting MS is the Red Book of Talgarth, presented to Rev. Moses Williams on September 19th, 1719, by John Powell of Talgarth, Brecknockshire.

This MS is in the same writing as large portions of the Red Book of Hergest, now preserved at the Bodleian Library, and it was probably written about 1400. It contains a few poems by Dafydd ap Gwilym, probably representing the oldest version extant of the poetry of that celebrated bard. It is in excellent condition, and is a fine example of Welsh calligraphy. Another MS in the collection was written by the celebrated poet Gutyn Owen, in 1455 and 1456. There are also in the Collection four very large MSS of Welsh poetry written by one hand in the 17th century. These MSS are folios, containing respectively 646, 652, 672 and 806 pp. The largest MS in the Collection is one written about 1700 by Samuel Williams, and his helpers. It measures 14 in. by 9 in., and contains between 1,200 and 1,300 Welsh poems.

All the printed books in the Shirburn Collection are before 1750, when the books became the property of Lord Macclesfield. Owing to their careful preservation the books are in magnificent condition. When the Williamses, father and son, gathered their library, book collecting in Wales was unknown, and they had the pick of everything which came in their way. And, too, books were extant then of which practically all the copies have since perished. An illustration of this is afforded by the earliest known printed book in the Welsh language, "Yny Lhyvyr hwnn", a Welsh primer by Sir John Price, printed in 1546, and an undated collection of Welsh Proverbs by William Salesbury. Both these works are in the Library, and no other copies are known.

The first book printed in Wales (see illustration) is also in the Shirburn Library, and no other copy is known. The supposed earliest piece of Welsh printing was dated 1719, but this little book from the press of Isaac Carter at Trehedyn is dated 1718.

And so with many other rare volumes, like "Kynniver llith a ban" and the Dictionary of William Salesbury, either they are unique, or nearly all the other known copies are imperfect. Of the twenty-two books known to have been printed in Welsh before 1600 eighteen are in Sir John Williams's Library, and one, making nineteen, is in another collection transferred to the National Library.

Mynegai

Llansteffan, Defynnog, Llyfr Coch Hergest, Llyfrgell Bodley, Trehedyn, Cernyweg, Sieffre o Fynwy.

SIR JOHN WILLIAMS

1909019

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

To supply other MSS in the Collection several notable Libraries have been laid under contribution. From the Libraries of Lord Ashburnham, of Sir Thomas Phillipps of Middlehill, of Mr Breese of Portmadoc, Sir Lewis Morris, Gwallter Mechain, Jenkins of Kerry and many others, MSS have been derived. For many years Sir John has had the first refusal of all MSS and rare books relating to Wales passing through the hands of Mr Quaritch, the famous bookseller, and other well-known dealers.

The number of MSS is about 500. Though the Shirburn MSS form the most important section of the Llanstephan Collection there are other manuscripts of great interest and value in it. Sir John is the owner of an autograph MS of the Treatise of Lordship Marchers in Wales, written by George Owen, the versatile historian of Pembrokeshire, and he has also some interesting autograph MSS of Edward Lloyd, the father of modern philology.

Among the Breese MSS purchased by him is a small book of poetry composed and written by William Salesbury of Bachymbyd in 1655 (Llanstephan 170B). This was the Salesbury who heroically held Denbigh Castle for the King during the Civil War, and refused to capitulate until he had the written permission of the King to do so. He is known to Welsh history as Salesbury of the Blue Stockings. After the King's defeat and death Salesbury retired to the country and devoted himself to good works. Among other things he collected the poems and songs of Vicar Prichard of Llandoverly. This collection is still extant, one MS being at the British Museum and the other in the Llanstephan Collection.

Mynegai

Porthmadog, Walter Davies, Ceri, Llansteffan, George Owen of Henllys, Sir Benfro, castell Dinbych, Llanyftri, Llanymddyfri, Yr Amgueddfa Brydeinig.

JOHN PARRY, LLANARMON

1909020

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

In the pursuit of books Sir John Williams, like the famous bibliophile, Sir Thomas Phillipps, has more than once bought up a whole library in order to secure a comparatively small number of rare books contained in it. Some readers will remember John Parry of Llanarmon, who, twenty years ago, was known throughout the Principality as a trenchant speaker on Disestablishment. In private life Parry was a farmer and Methodist deacon in Flintshire, one of the last descendants of a race of sturdy yeomen who had been leaders of Methodism for generations in Wales. Few people, however, realised that John Parry was one of the most voracious collectors of Welsh books, and no mean authority on Welsh bibliography. He had imbibed a taste for collecting from his ancestors, who had bought Williams of Pantycelyn's hymns and elegies, Robert Jones of Rhoslan's lesson books, and Charles of Bala's catechisms as they were issued, and preserved them carefully for their descendants. Each generation added to the stock of books, so that when John Parry himself began collecting he had in his possession the nucleus of an excellent library.

After Parry's death the collection was bought by Sir John Williams, who himself catalogued the books and kept them apart from the rest of his Library, separately labelled as the "Parry Llanarmon Collection". It is hoped that they will be so preserved in the National Library as an illustration of the high degree of culture and the love of reading of a Puritan farmer of the 19th century. This collection alone contains about 4,000 volumes.

Mynegai

Sir Fflint.

BIBLES, PRAYER BOOKS AND HYMNOLOGY

1909021

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The Library is particularly rich in Bibles, Prayer Books and Hymnology. Every Welsh Bible printed before 1800, and many of those latter, is included. There are two copies of the first Bible, 1588, one, the Shirburn copy, is probably the tallest and finest in existence, and the second is also a very fine one. The Salesbury New Testament, 1567, is also represented by two copies, both perfect and in fine condition. The volume of the Psalms, translated by Bishop Morgan and printed in 1588, the same year as his Bible, is extremely rare, only six copies being known, two of these being in Sir John's Library.

Still rarer is the translation of the Psalms by Edward Kyffin, printed by Thomas Salesbury in 1603, the only copy known being amongst the treasures now transferred to the National Library. Mention has already been made of the earliest Welsh book, 1546, Sir John Price's Primer, which contains the first portions of Scripture ever Printed in Welsh, and the "Kynniver llith a ban", 1551, containing the Gospels and Epistles for Sundays and Holydays to be read at the celebration of the Holy Communion.

The Prayer Books are in their way even more notable than the Bibles, as they include, with three quite unimportant exceptions, every issue down to 1800, including the first translation by Richard Davies, Bishop of St David's and William Salesbury, 1567, of this only two other copies are known.

There were five editions of the Prayer Book before 1664, viz., 1567, 1588, 1599, 1621, 1634. All these are rare, and all are here. The Prayer Book of 1621 contains at the end the material version of the Psalms by Edmund Prys, Archdeacon of Merioneth, the first time for this version to appear. The Archdeacon's version of the Psalms has retained its popularity down to the present day, and was formerly included in every edition of the Bible.

There are two copies of the 1621 Prayer Book, one in a handsome gold-tooled binding, with the royal arms on the sides, and engraved clasps, was probably bound for presentation to the king, James I.

Mynegai

Bishop William Morgan, Tyddewi, Meirionnydd.

WORKS BY GREAT WRITERS CONNECTED WITH WALES

1909022

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The Library is rich in works by the great writers connected with Wales, and in works dealing with specific periods, such as the Civil War and the Eighteenth Century Revival. Of individual writers there is an extensive series of the works of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, including first editions of "Olor Iscanus", 1654, and "Hermetical Physic", 1655, a work translated by Henry Vaughan. Thomas Vaughan, the Silurist's brother, is also well represented, practically all his mystical and magical writings and most of his tracts written during the Civil War being in the Library.

Other important writers fully represented are William Williams of Pantycelyn, the great hymn writer; Rhys Pritchard, Vicar of Llandovery, author of "Canwyll y Cymru"; John Penry, the Breconshire man, who was put to death for his independent views in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and whose books are extremely rare; Morgan Llwyd of Wrexham, the mystic, whose works have just been reprinted in the Guild of Graduates series; John Owen, the epigrammatist; John Davies of Kidwelly, and James Howell. Welsh books are a strong feature of the Library. It contains a very large number dated before 1800 not to be found in Rowlands's Cambrian Bibliography. The student of purely Welsh literature will find precious and rare and unknown books without end, while the student of Celtic languages will find books relating to the literature and philology of Gaelic, Irish, Cornish and Breton.

Mynegai

Llandyfri, Llanymddyfri, Wrecsam, Cedweli, Gwyddeleg, Cernyweg, Llydaweg.

BOOKS FROM WELSH PRESSES

1909023

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

An interesting feature of the Library is the large number of rare books printed at native presses. From the first press set up in Wales at Adpar, near Newcastle Emlyn, from the Carmarthen printers, the Bodedern press, the private press set up by Lewis Morris in Anglesey, the Bala printers, the Trevecca press, the early Pontypool press, and many others come rare books, which will be of great value in elucidating the history of literature and printing in Wales (Dept of Printed Books).

Mynegai

Sir Fôn, Trefecca, Caerfyrddin, Castellnewydd Emlyn, Pont-y-pwl.

KELMSCOTT PRESS PUBLICATIONS

1909024

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

The Library includes a perfect set of the publications printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press (Dept of Printed Books). Sir John Williams was one of the original subscribers for the works of this press, and all his copies are in choice condition. He is also the possessor of a good copy of the second folio of Shakespeare.

OLD WELSH TEXTS

1909025

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Of the series of Old Welsh Texts edited and published by Dr John Gwenogvryn Evans, there is a set printed on the finest vellum. These are amongst the best examples of modern printing, much of the work being done at Dr Gwenogvryn Evans's own press.

BALLADS AND OTHER WELSH POETRY

1909026

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

This is also a large section, and it would be difficult to name any poet, however rare his works, who is not represented, while the number of ballads is very large.

GEORGE BORROW

1909027

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Early editions of the works of George Borrow, the versatile genius who wrote "Wild Wales", and loved the bards of Wales as he loved its hills, streams and valleys, are much sought after by collectors, and here are Borrowians who will make journeys to the National Library expressly to gaze upon and examine the books by, and relating to, him in the Llanstephan Library. For not only has Sir John been able to secure copies of all the rare editions, but some of them have Borrow's autograph, and the Collection includes books from Borrow's own library. Here, for example, is the copy of Dafydd ap Gwilym's poems with Borrow's notes, and many other books in Welsh, English and French which belonged to him.

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE

1909028

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

There is a fine collection of books and MSS bearing on the Arthurian Romances, the earliest printed book being "Lancelot du lac", 1488, with several of the other romances in the Arthurian cycle printed before 1600. The MSS include some which will probably be edited for publication within the next few years.

ROBERT RECORDE

1909029

Statws / Status

Rhodd / Donation

Ffynhonnell / Source

Sir John Williams

Blwyddyn / Year

Adroddiad Blynnyddol / Annual Report 1909

Disgrifiad / Description

Sir John Williams has made a special point of buying the works of Robert Recorde of Tenby, the writer on arithmetic and other scholastic subjects. Recorde was one of the famous sons of Wales, too little known nowadays. Amongst his works are "The Castle of Knowledge", 1556, "The Whetstone of Witte", 1557, and "The Pathway of Knowledge", 1551.

It is impossible in a brief report to do more than indicate the main lines of the collections made by Sir John Williams. They represent the devotion of a lifetime. The full extent of the success which has crowned this fine effort will be seen when the MSS and Books have been catalogued.

Mynegai

Dinbych-y-pysgod.