



Rev. R. Rowlands.  
1838-1891

“Rolant ap Gwilym.”

So far it was only southern and eastern accents heard in the pulpit in Saron, but this changed over the coming years. The tide of the revival of Fifty-Nine reached Saron and the chapel was in a beautiful spiritual state. In 1864, Rev. R. Rowlands, a student from the Seminary in Bala, toured the south to raise money for the college. He was to preach at Moriah, Cwmaman on a Sunday morning at the beginning of the winter of 1864 and, at Saron in the evening. While he was in Cwmaman he received word that there would be no opportunity for him to preach or collect at Saron.

But letter or not, he came to Saron. At five o'clock a temperance meeting was held which he attended. He received a lukewarm reception, and there would be, definitely be no collection. There must have been some opposition to the College which was so far from the south or lack of interest in it. He was invited to take part in the meeting which he did, and he sang “Pwy fel Efe” beautifully. By some strange coincidence, the gentleman who was meant to take the evening service had let them down at the last minute and the student had his chance. When he entered the service, John Williams stood up and greeted him from the Deacons Seat (set fawr). “Come in, this is God’s servant and the minister of Saron.” The student had done a great service and was invited back twice in three weeks and at that Sunday evening service there was great rejoicing, and he was invited to become the Minister of the chapel. He was ordained in June 1864. The Rev. M. D. Jones preached on “The Nature of a Chapel;” the Rev. W. Roberts, Liverpool admonished the minister, and the chapel was admonished by the Rev John Davies, Cardiff.

The first two years were exceptional due to their religious vitality. Work and religion were doing well, but after two years there came a time of great social confusion which had quite an effect on the Aberaman area. Work was rare and many of Saron’s members left leaving the chapel to face hard times for the next nine years. But the leader was a good man, and the officials were hard-working and forceful, and they managed to overcome these difficult times triumphantly. This period was but the rehearsal for a similar and worse period that Saron and Aberaman would have to endure in the new century. As proof of the minister’s success, at the end of nine years, Mr Rowlands was awarded, with, a watch and gold chain engraved with these words:

“Presented by the congregation and church of Saron Chapel, Aberaman, to the Rev. R. Rowlands as a mark of esteem for his faithful service” 16<sup>th</sup> June 1873.

He elevated many young men to the ministry and was a great influence on the lives of the young. It is good to read John Rees and Hywel Cynon’s evidence in his memoir and, in song. During Mr Rowlands’ time, the chapel was completely renovated at a cost, of £1,400. It is said that the floor

was lowered and that someone told Mr. Rowlands, "I see you intend to turn Saron into a cellar," to which he replied, "Yes, and by God, we'll keep the best wine there too." He was rewarded again and received a testimonial of £200 which friends outside Saron had also contributed towards.



A beautiful memoir was written for Mr. Rowlands by the Rev. Silyn Evans, Siloa, Aberdare and I suggest all the young members of Saron read it. It is obvious, from the memoir, why Mr. Rowlands was so loved by the chapel, the area, and the denomination. He is still held dear by those who remember him in his heyday, and they all talk of him with fondness and affection. After a long affliction, he died on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1891. It is said that his funeral was the biggest ever seen in Saron. His remains were buried in the public cemetery at Aberdare. Saron had much to thank him for. As it neared the end of the nineteenth century Saron was a flourishing chapel. His son Mr J. W. Rowlands and his daughter Mrs. Morris are here at the time of this celebration, and we would like to greet them in fond memory of their father.

Rowlands! A happier man was never had,  
Or a more honest brother:  
The lord will never have a more faithful servant,  
Than dear Rowlands.  
(Hwfa Mon).

Rev. R. Rowlands 05.06.1891

The numerous friends of the Rev R. Rowlands, the well-known pastor of Saron, Aberaman, will be pained to hear of his death, which occurred on Wednesday afternoon after a lingering illness of over six months. Much sympathy is expressed for the bereaved widow and son and daughter. Mr Rowlands was in the twenty-seventh year of his pastorate and was greatly beloved. The funeral takes place on Monday next.

Funeral.

On Monday the funeral of the Rev. R. Rowlands, Congregational minister, Saron, Aberaman, whose demise took place on the previous Thursday, was held.

Rev. R. Rowlands was a native of Pentrefoelas, in Denbighshire, where he began to preach. Thence he proceeded to Bala College, where he was trained under the well-known professor, the Rev. Michael D. Jones. Receiving it and from Saron, Aberaman, to become their minister, he

accepted it, and was ordained there in 1864. the Rev. Michael D. Jones (his tutor), the late Rev. John Davies, of Cardiff, a former pastor of the church, Rev. W. Roberts, Liverpool, and others taking part in his ordination services. Here he has proved for 27 years a most acceptable and beloved pastor, well-spoken of by all, endearing himself more and more year by year to all who came in contact with him.

He has however, been a great sufferer from ill-health. For 13 years past he has been from time to time laid up for months at a stretch, and one occasion at for at least for 12 months, during which time the neighbouring ministers regularly occupied his pulpit free of charge, as they have also done for some time past. Sometime ago his medical adviser informed him that owing to his having a decayed bone in his leg, it would be necessary for his to have his leg amputated, and, ultimately, he underwent that operation some three weeks ago. His extreme prostration was, however, such that his recovery was despaired of, and he succumbed to the fell decease as stated.

About two years ago the people of his choose and his numerous friends presented him with a handsome testimonial, which he found of great service during his lengthened illness. On Monday, the appearance of the town proved clearly that a great man was to be buried every business house in the village being closed. Long before 2.30 p.m. the hour announced for the funeral, the handsome chapel, which was renovated some 12 months ago, was filled to overflowing and when they brought hundreds failed to obtain admission.

Among the leading ministers present was D. Silyn Evans; J. Davies, Soar; J. Grawys Jones; W. Thomas, Tabernacle; J. D. Rees, Salem; D. S. Davies, Siloh; R. J. Jones (U.), Thomas Rowlands, Rowlands, (C.M.). W. Jones (C.M.), and R. E. Williams, (Twrffab, B.), Aberdare; H. A. Davies, Cwmaman; W. S. Davies, Llwydcoed; D. Griffiths, Cwmdare; W. Ceulawydd Davies, Aberdare; J. Davies, Abercwmboi; W. M. Jones, (Adulam); Isaac J. Evans, D. C. Thomas, Merthyr; R. Griffiths, Cefn Coed; J. Davies, Wern, Ystalyfera; D. Richards, Aberdare; Ll. S. Williams, Williamstown; J. G. Jenkins, Llwynypia; J. George, Dinas; J. Williams, Hafod; P. Jones (B.), Penrhiwceiber; Owen Jones, T. Anthony, Mountain Ash; J. Evans. Nelson; J. Davies, and D. S. Davies, Carmarthen; D. Thomas, Cymer; Lewis Probert, Pentre; D. Morgan, Ystradfellte; Joseph Leary, Hirwain; Thomas Davies, Ogmere Vale; W. C. Davies, Llantrisant; W. D. Morris, M. D. Morris, (M.C.), Cwmaman; J. Solon Rees, Llanhilleth; Jenkin James, Porth; D. M. Davies, Cwmbach; J. Llywellyn, Llantrisant; R. Humphreys, Tredegar ; O. H. Hughes, Tylorstown ; J. B. Williams, Llandoverly; W. Gilbert Evans, Coity; J. Jones and D. Griffiths, Penar, Swansea; J. O. Evans, Ynysybwl; J. D. Thomas, Horeb, Penydarren; D. W. Rees, Blackwood; T. Selby, Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen; G. Gronon, Pontypridd; J. T. Evans, Brynmawr; R. Thomas. Penrhiwceiber; T. Jenkins, Ferndale; J. Henry, Maerdy; J. Beynon Davies, D. G. Morgan, Resolven; Thomas Davies, Salem, Trelyn; D. Phillips, Treharris; Henry Jones, W. C. Crocker, J P. Rees, Glandwr Taf; E. W. Williams. Nebo, Hirwain; P. W. Hough and D. Jones, Salem, Merthyr; R. S. Williams, R. Trevor and W. L Hughes, Dowlais; O. L. Roberts, Cardiff; Martin Luther Jones, Vicar of Aberaman; W. D. Thomas, Brynmawr; R. Evans, Penmain; D. Lloyd Morgan, Skewen; D. Glyn Davies, Glynneath; T. Horeb, Morrision; D. Jones, Cwmbwrla; D. Richards, Caerphilly; I. Edwards, Neath; T. Howells (Hywel Cynon), Aberman; J. Bowen and Elias Maurice, Merthyr; Messrs. T. Williams, J.P., Merthyr; D. P. Davies, J.P, Ynyslwyd; W. Phillips, Post Office, Aberdare: W. Bevan, Mountain Ash; Henry Lewis, Charles Street, Cardiff; J. H. Powell, Henry Davies, Re. Rees, J. Rees, Tyrheol; B. Jones, Aberaman; Dl. Thomas Canon Street, Aberdare; Morgan John, Cwmbach; T. Thomas, Ystrad Rhondda; Henry Eynon, Mountain Ash; and Coun. T. Davies, Abercwmboi.



The Grave of Rev. R. Rowlands, Aberdare Cemetery.

The whole arrangement of the funeral service was intrusted to the Rev. D. Silyn Evans, Siloa, Aberdare, the Rev. J. Davies, Soar, Aberdare, giving out the hymns. The Rev. J. Jones, Llangwm, Carmarthenshire, read and prayed, after which the Rev. D. Thomes, Cymmer, preached a most pathetic sermon from Psalm 116, 15, verse, "Precious in the sight of the Lord in the death of His Saints." After which the Rev. J. Davies, Horeb, Morriston, the closing prayer.

The Rev. D. S. Evans, then read a letter of regret for his inability for non-attendance from the Rev. T. Davies (B), Gwawr, Aberaman, who has been a pastor of a neighbouring church for 16 years past. Letters and telegrams of regret were also received from a large number of the leading ministers in North Wales sad a minder of laymen, including the Vicar of Aberdare and nearly every Nonconformist minister who was not present.

The procession was then formed in the following order: Ministers and leading laymen, numbering 200; choir, numbering over 350; deacons, 15; members of the church and general public, carrying the deceased, and numbering body; female members of the church and congregation and lady friends, the rear being brought up by some 30 vehicles, containing some 300 persons. The funeral was one of the largest ever seen in the valley, and so solemn cortege weeded its way through the town, the choir singing some well-known Welsh hymns, the scene was impressive.

At the cemetery the hymns were given out by the Rev. H. A. Davies, (Cwmaman), and short addresses then delivered by the Rev L Jones (Tyncoed) and the Rev. R. Evans (Penmain), after which the old patriarch preacher, the Rev. R. Griffiths, Tabor (Cefn-coed-y-cymmer), offered the closing prayer, after which the huge concourse departed, but not before many a silent tear dropped on the coffin of one who was greatly loved, and so deeply lamented.