

James Williams (1880-1957)

James Williams was born at the Welsh village of Llanddewi Brefi, Cardiganshire, on 13 April 1879. He was the seventh of the nine children of David and Anne Williams, with five brothers and three sisters. James was raised in the family farmhouse, Pant-Gwyn, on the Llanfair Mountain.

In 1963, the Reverend David Williams, a neighbour and colleague of members of James's family, published a local history book. In the book, Reverend Williams provided information about James's family, and recalled that James Williams after working in the coal mines in South Wales for a few years became a student at Lampeter Grammar School and eventually became an Anglican minister. Crockford's Clerical Directory of 1932 confirms that James studied at St David's College in Lampeter and graduated with a Licentiate in Divinity in 1910. He was ordained as deacon in 1911 and a priest in 1912. James subsequently served as curate of the church in Llandybie between 1911 and 1914 before moving to Derbyshire to become curate at St Mary's Church at Crich between 1914 and 1922. By 1918 James was living on The Common, Crich with his wife, Mary Ann. They appear not to have had any children.



James with his wife Mary Ann

His entry in Crockford's Clerical Directory also shows that, during his time at Crich, James served as Temporary Chaplain to the Forces in 1918-1919. Army chaplains are the only British Army officers who do not carry standard officer ranks. They are officially designated 'Chaplain to the Forces' (CF), though they do have grades which equate to the standard ranks and wear the insignia of the equivalent rank. Chaplains were usually addressed as 'Padre', never by their nominal military rank. A Chaplain to the Forces 4th Class (the lowest class) equated to the nominal military rank of Captain. Although no service records have been located for James, it can therefore be assumed that this nominal rank of Captain was used when his name was listed on the Roll of Honour inside St Mary's Church at Crich.

After his war service ended, James returned to his post as curate at St Mary's Church, Crich before becoming Vicar Of Christ Church at Wessington in 1922. After the Benefices of Wessington and Brackenfield were united in 1923, James also assumed responsibility for Holy Trinity Church at Brackenfield. It has been suggested that James remained in this latter post until his retirement, whereupon he returned to Wales with his wife. Reverend James Williams passed away at Swansea on 19 September 1957, aged seventy eight. He was laid to rest in the village of Pontyberem in Carmarthenshire.

Derbyshire Courier, 12 October 1918

Harvest services at the Parish Church, Crich, realised £10 on behalf of the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary. The fruit was also sent to the infirmary. A member of Thursday evening's congregation was the Rev James Williams, formerly curate of the parish, and now a chaplain in the forces.

Derbyshire Courier, 16 November 1918

CRICH, LEA, & HOLLOWAY.

Owing to illness of the vicar the services at Crich Parish Church were conducted by the Rev. James Williams on Sunday. Mr Williams, who has been curate in the parish for several years, is a chaplain with the forces.