

PREFACE

THE Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion presents this Dictionary of Welsh Biography to the public with confidence that it is a major contribution to Welsh scholarship. Its production has been a long, difficult and hazardous undertaking, which could not have been brought to completion without a high degree of cordial understanding between all concerned in its making. Indeed, the Society has never worked so happily with anyone as it has with those who have collaborated in this work.

The Society was not unaware, even in the days before the war, of the magnitude and difficulty of the task it had set itself. The Council's original instructions in 1937 to Professor R. T. Jenkins (one of its members) were to draw out a plan for a single-volume dictionary of approximately one thousand pages, the work to be new and scholarly, readily appreciable by the general reader yet useful to research workers and scholars. His plan was put into operation with Sir John Edward Lloyd as Editor, and Professor Jenkins as Associate Editor.

The Editors at one point reported to the Dictionary Committee that a two-volume, or even a multi-volume, dictionary would be needed to contain the material required; but the Committee stood adamant for a single volume of approximately one thousand pages. The Editors at a later stage suggested that by confining biographies to those of really eminent persons they could compress into a volume of half that size. The Committee however requested the Editors to include as many biographies as possible within the limits of a single volume. The Committee's view was that what was needed was not merely a collection of biographies of eminent Welshmen but a work illustrating all aspects of the history of Wales. The Editors have worked within those limitations, and any critic of the dictionary now produced should bear in mind that it is the Committee that is responsible for the size of the book.

There are many reasons why the work has taken twenty-two years to produce. Professor Jenkins was, in its early stages, charged with his duties as head of the department of Welsh History at the University College of North Wales; the war brought the work temporarily to a standstill, though it did not completely interrupt the consultations between Professor Jenkins and his chief, Sir John Edward Lloyd, who had by then chosen to become Consulting Editor; the Society became alarmed at the greatly increasing cost of paper and printing; it made

further demands on Professor Jenkins's time by commissioning him to write, in collaboration with Mrs. Helen Ramage, the *History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* for its bicentenary in 1951; and in recent years Professor Jenkins has had to take things a little more easily than has been his custom. Sir John Lloyd died in 1947. Sir William Llewelyn Davies was then (with the cordial assent of the Council of the National Library of Wales, of which he was the Librarian) appointed Associate Editor to assist Professor Jenkins. He gave immense assistance until his death in 1952, after a long and painful illness. His secretary, Miss Margaret Beatrice Davies, who had done the clerical work for both Editors, now became sub-editor, and has acted as assistant editor of the present English edition.

The Dictionary Committee's pre-war estimate of cost had led the Committee to believe that they could finance the dictionary with donations from private individuals. It was not intended that the Society itself should contribute to the Dictionary Fund, as its resources were very slender, but it was to provide the driving force. By 1945, however, the Dictionary Fund was down to £75 15s. 0d.; by the end of 1946 it was in debt to the bank. Costs were still mounting. The Society lent the fund a sum of £250 to tide things over and made an appeal to its members. The members responded nobly, and the Society itself made a donation of £1,000. The work proceeded, but the costs still rose. Our President, Sir Wynn Wheldon, suggested an approach to the counties and county boroughs of Wales for grants out of the funds which had come to them under the Welsh Church Acts, 1914-1945. There were seventeen such authorities, and each authority had its separate views and policies as to what it should do with the moneys it had received. The Honorary Secretary personally visited most of these authorities, and addressed conferences of the Federation of Welsh Local Education Authorities, the Welsh Counties Committee, and other bodies. An appeal was also made to the Universities of Wales, Liverpool and London, and to Jesus College, Oxford. Funds began to come in from numerous quarters and the generality of the support so impressed the Pilgrim Trust that they made the largest single donation of all. This dictionary could not have been brought to completion without these donations. It was thought more fitting that a complete list of donors be published in the Society's *Transactions* than that they should all be mentioned here. The dictionary was published in Welsh in 1953 under the title *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig hyd 1940*. It received a warm and generous welcome in every quarter. It was acclaimed as a massive contribution to scholarship.

The present English edition is not a mere translation of the Welsh volume. The intervening years have enabled the Editors to pick up

the fruits of later research and to make many corrections. It is up to date as far as knowledge goes at present. The Society has been pressed to name the book 'The Cymmrodorion Dictionary of Welsh Biography' in tribute to the Society's responsibility for the work. The Council, however, decided it should be called 'The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940, prepared under the auspices of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion.' But the Society's task does not come to an end with the publication of the Welsh and English volumes down to 1940. Plans have been put into operation for the publication of supplements, at intervals of approximately ten years. Dr. Thomas Parry, then Librarian of the National Library of Wales, was appointed Associate Editor to Professor Jenkins, and assisted in the preparation of the first supplement until his appointment as Principal of the University College of Wales. He has been followed as Associate Editor by Mr. E. D. Jones, his successor at the National Library of Wales, and the Council of the National Library of Wales has readily offered the continuance of its active co-operation. The Welsh and English editions of the first supplement (1941-50) will follow as soon as possible on the publication of this present volume.

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