

JONES, JOSIAH THOMAS (1799 - 1873), publisher and Independent minister

Name: Josiah Thomas Jones
Date of birth: 1799
Date of death: 1873
Gender: Male
Occupation: publisher and Independent minister
Area of activity: Printing and Publishing; Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 23 September 1799 at Cwm-hir, Clydey, Pembrokeshire, to Thomas and Rachel Jones, who were members of Tre-lech congregation. At 14 he went to serve in a shop at Nevern, but at 15 (now at Narberth) he began preaching under the wing of Llwyn-yr-hwrdd church; after a little instruction by [Samuel Griffiths](#) there, he went to Newport Pagnell Academy. Though *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru* has no note of it, it would seem that for a short time he had charge of Keyston and Wolfsdale churches, near Haverfordwest; but it is certain that on 6 August 1828 he became pastor of Pen-dref, Caernarvon. He resigned in 1831, his successor was [Caledfryn](#), but continued to live in the town till 1836 as a printer and publisher. From Caernarvon he went to Merthyr Tydfil, where he started the *Merthyr and Cardiff Chronicle*, but the ironmasters of Merthyr, angered by his Radicalism, made the place too hot for him, and he removed to Cowbridge to publish. In 1838 he went to Carmarthen and renewed his contact with the ministry by taking charge of the churches of Llan-y-bri and Bethesda - we are told, however, that 'they were in no sense flourishing' under his care, naturally, for his main interest was his printing-press in Carmarthen town. Finally (1852), he moved to Aberdare. He died there at midnight, 26/27 January 1873.

Obviously Jones was not a success as a pastor. Nor, indeed - so many irons had he in the fire - did he make a financial success of his publishing business, despite his indefatigable industry. But he accomplished much, and rendered very great service. He was an out-and-out Radical, with a passion for diffusing knowledge of all kinds (especially in theology and politics) among his countrymen. Only a few of his numerous publications can be named here. At Caernarvon he had a hand in [Caledfryn](#)'s periodical *Y Seren Ogleddol*, and began to publish the *Welsh Biblical Dictionary* by [William Jones](#) (1784 - 1847) of Bridgend. At Merthyr Tydfil, as has been mentioned, he published a Radical newspaper. At Cowbridge he finished publishing the *Biblical Dictionary*, and started the periodicals *Yr Odydd* and *Y Gwron Cymreig*. He kept up the *Gwron* at Carmarthen, and published there also a number of books, of which his *Daearyddiaeth Ysgrythyrol* (Scripture Geography) was one. Most fruitful of all was his Aberdare period; there he published *Y Gweithiwr* and *The Aberdare Times*, and a good number of books. The most famous of the latter is the two-volume biographical dictionary *Y Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol* (1867, 1870), much of which he himself wrote. It is not only uneven in execution but chaotic in arrangement - true, it is 'alphabetical' in the sense that all its 'Joneses' are under 'J', but they follow each other without the slightest regard to alphabetical order, and the work has no index. Still, the book is invaluable, and contributors to the present work owe much to it. It is the largest of all Welsh biographical dictionaries, and contains articles on a good many people who figure in no other dictionary (not, for example, in the present work), but concerning whom a student may well want information.

Some very well known Welsh littérateurs from time to time worked in J. T. Jones's printing offices; [Iago ap Dewi](#) and [Cawrdaf](#) may serve as examples.

[David Griffiths](#) (1756 - 1834) of Nevern was J. T. Jones's uncle.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru, iii, 234, 385, 388

D. Silyn Evans, *Y Geninen*, March 1907, 26-30

Works

Josiah Thomas Jones, [Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol o Enwogion Cymru \(Aberdâr 1867-70\)](#)

Josiah Thomas Jones, [Traethawd ar y geri marwol: yn yr hwn y gosodir allan natur yr afiechyd - yr achosion o hono - a'r gocheliadau i'w defnyddio rhagddo yn ol golygiadau prif feddygon yr oes \(Aberdar 1855\)](#)

John Williams, Josiah Thomas Jones, [Hanes rhyfedd anturiaethau cenadol yn Ynysoedd Mor y Deau \(Caerfyrddin 1841\)](#)

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [J. T. Jones Manuscripts](#)

Wikidata: [Q13129369](#)

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