

LEWIS, JOHN DAVID (1859 - 1914), bookseller, local historian, and founder of a printing press

Name: John David Lewis
Date of birth: 1859
Date of death: 1914
Spouse: Hannah Lewis (née Lewis)
Child: Edward Lewis
Child: Rhys Lewis
Child: David Lewis
Parent: Hannah Lewis
Parent: David Lewis
Gender: Male
Occupation: bookseller, local historian, and founder of a printing press
Area of activity: Business and Industry; History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing
Author: John Tysul Jones

He was born 22 January 1859 at Llandysul, where he lived all his life, the only son of David and Hannah Lewis, Market Stores. He was educated at the following schools at Llandysul : the British school, a private school kept by Herbert Jones in a house called Penwalcau, and the grammar school kept by [Gwilym Marles](#) - ' the memory of which is dear to me,' to quote J. D. Lewis's own words. On his father's side he was descended from a highly respected family in the Cerdin valley, the famous preacher [Christmas Evans](#) being of the same stock, while on his mother's side he was descended from a family of well-to-do farmers in the parish of Cilrhedyn. From his early days he was interested in the literature, history, and folk-lore of his neighbourhood, and made a collection of books, pamphlets, and periodicals which were of interest to Llandysul, either because of the subject-matter or because they were by local writers. This early love for books and literature caused him to start selling Welsh books, periodicals, and papers in his father's general shop, and was responsible for his decision in 1892 to start a printing press. As his assistant he engaged a young lad from Llannerch-y-medd, Anglesey, of the name of William John Jones, who was to remain the head printer of Messrs. J. D. Lewis and Sons from 1892 until his death in 1955. In 1894 the business was moved from the Market Stores to the present building in the ' Gomer Press,' and from then on was confined to publishing and bookselling. The press was so named probably out of compliment to [Joseph Harris](#) (Gomer) whom J. D. Lewis admired. The first books to be published there were *Hanes Plwyf Llandyssul* ([W. J. Davies](#), 1896), *Hanes Plwyf Llangelor a Phenboyr* ([Daniel E. Jones](#), 1899), and *Hanes Plwyf Llangunllo* (E. Cunllo Davies, 1905). Here, too, were published the monthly *Cwrs y Byd* (ed. [E. Pan Jones](#)), and from 1900 on *Yr Ymofyn(n)ydd*, the Unitarian monthly. In 1911 Lewis won a prize at the national eisteddfod held at Carmarthen for a collection of Welsh ballads, which is now in the National Library of Wales. He also collaborated with the late [John Davies](#) (1860 - 1939) in writing the winning essay in the national eisteddfod held at Aberystwyth, 1916, ' Llenorion Sir Aberteifi, braslun o'u hanes a rhestr gyflawn o'u gweithiau cyhoeddedig rhwng 1600 a 1900 '. (N.L.W. MS. 8705.)

He married Hannah Lewis of Llandysul, and they had four sons. He was a justice of the peace, and a founder-member of the Welsh Bibliographical Society on the council of which he sat in 1911. He died 30 September 1914, and was buried in the burial-ground of the Baptist chapel, Pen-y-bont, Llandysul, of which he had been deacon and treasurer in succession to his father from the year 1899.

Author

John Tysul Jones, (1902 - 1986)

Sources

Cymru (O.M.E.)

Y Genhinen, October 1952, 198-202

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