
JONES, GWILYM EIRWYN ('EIRWYN PONTSHÂN') (1922-1994), carpenter, entertainer, nationalist

Name: Gwilym Eirwyn Jones
Pseudonym: Eirwyn Pontshân
Date of birth: 1922
Date of death: 1994
Spouse: Elizabeth Mary Jones (née Thomas)
Child: Blodeuwedd Jones
Child: Idwal Jones
Parent: Mary Theodosia Jones (née Jones)
Gender: Male
Occupation: carpenter, entertainer, nationalist
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Patriots; Performing Arts
Author: Lyn Ebenezer

Eirwyn Pontshân was born on 31 August 1922 at Preswylfa, Talgarreg, the son of Mary Theodosia Jones. He had a sister, Margaret Irene (Magina) Jones (later Thomas). The greatest influence on him in his childhood was his grandmother, Ruth Jones, Mynachlog. At the age of over eighty she published her autobiography, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog* (Gwasg Gomer 1939).

Eirwyn left the local school at the age of fourteen to become an apprentice carpenter, and as such he worked unpaid for two years. He subsequently worked for various employers throughout Cardiganshire and beyond. His work took him for a while to the Splott district in Cardiff. Amongst his employers were the County Council, and Urdd Gobaith Cymru when Eirwyn worked at Pantyfedwen Hall in Borth.

When the Second World War broke out he failed his medical examination and became a coalminer in the Cross Hands area. In 1947 he married Elizabeth Mary Thomas from Trisant. They had two children, a daughter Blodeuwedd and a son Idwal who became a carpenter like his father. The former was named in tribute to [Saunders Lewis](#) and the latter after another hero, the author and comedian [Idwal Jones](#).

The couple lived for a while in two rooms in a house in Borth. This experience was the basis for one of Eirwyn's classics, the modern parable 'Senedd Jôns y Ffish' (*Twyll Dyn* 8) about the failure of the 1979 referendum. The family lived in several places in north Cardiganshire, including Glyn Helyg in Bro Gynin, Y Bwthyn in Pen-y-garn and Troedrhiwfelen near Tre Taliesin, before eventually moving back to the south of the county to live at Pengelli, Pontshân, and it was whilst living there that he came to be known as Eirwyn Pontshân.

He often performed as a comedian at 'noson lawen' evenings, but the National Eisteddfod gave him his main stage. He

tended to hold impromptu sessions there, and rather than telling a string of jokes, he would recount stories based on his personal experiences. He has been described as an alternative comedian, long before the concept was invented. He never missed a National Eisteddfod, from Cardigan in 1942 right through to the early nineties. At the Aberystwyth Eisteddfod in 1952 the 'National Union of Welsh Boozers' (Undeb Cenedlaethol Tancwyr Cymru) was established by Harris Thomas, an architect from Caernarfon and his wife Stella, and Eirwyn was appointed its Honorary Life President. Although an informal movement, it had its own anthem and banner. This was when Eirwyn was first seen wearing his white cap, which became a kind of official emblem of his. The little man with the moustache and the white cap became a national figure. At the Fishguard Eisteddfod of 1986 he was made a member of the Gorsedd as 'Pontshân'.

At the end of the fifties he set up on his own as a carpenter and undertaker and moved back to Waunwen in Talgarreg, where he had a workshop in the village. The main influences on him there were the headmaster of the local school, Tom Stephens, and [Dewi Emrys](#), who lived there for eleven years in Y Bwthyn. Eirwyn attended [Dewi](#)'s evening classes and was a member of his drama company.

The family moved in 1959 to a smallholding on the outskirts of the village called Black Lion. Eirwyn changed the name of the house to Godre'r Garn. In the workshop next to that house he spent the rest of his working days. In 1962 he decided to sell the house and land, but when he realized that the buyer was from Essex he refused to go ahead with the sale and insisted on holding on to the place. It was there that he died on 12 February 1994. He was buried in Pysgah cemetery, not far from the grave of one of his heroes, [Dewi Emrys](#).

Author

Lyn Ebenezer

Sources

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Perlau Pontshân (1966)

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Published date: 2015-01-08

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