

JONES, THOMAS JOHN RHYS (1916 - 1997), teacher, lecturer and author

Name: Thomas John Rhys Jones
Date of birth: 1916
Date of death: 1997
Spouse: Stella Winnona Mary Jones (née Price)
Spouse: Eilonwy Jones (née Jenkins)
Child: Rhodri Prys Jones
Child: Berwyn Prys Jones
Child: Meirion Prys Jones
Child: Rhoslyn Prys
Parent: Evan Thomas Jones
Parent: Elizabeth Jones (née Rees)
Gender: Male
Occupation: teacher, lecturer and author
Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing
Author: Dafydd Johnston

T. J. Rhys Jones was born in Ystradgynlais, Breconshire, on 19 June 1916, the eldest of the three sons of Evan Thomas Jones (1879-1948), a miner who later became an insurance collector, and his wife Elizabeth (Bessie) Jones (née Rees, 1884-1962), a milliner.

Brought up in Gellinudd on the outskirts of Pontardawe, he attended Pontardawe Grammar School before moving on to University College of Wales, Swansea where he graduated with first class honors in Welsh under [Professor Henry Lewis](#). Although he did research into the Welsh interludes for which he gained an MA degree, he chose not to publish the results as the language of some of the interludes would have been too coarse and indecent to suit public tastes at the time. (He later wrote an article on the interludes - though his name as author was misspelled as T. H. Rhys Jones - for *Gw r Llên y Ddeunawfed Ganrif*, a volume of essays on eighteenth-century Welsh writers, edited by [Dyfnallt Morgan](#), 1966.)

A Baptist by conviction and a regular chapel-goer, he was a conscientious objector during the Second World War and for a time worked on his future father-in-law's farm near Llandovery. Appointed a teacher of Welsh at Tonyrefail after the war, he remained there only a year before moving to a post as a teacher of Welsh and music at the Garw Grammar School in Pontycymer. In 1946 he married Stella (1919-1984), a former domestic science teacher and a non-Welsh speaker - at the time - from Swansea. They had four sons, Rhodri Prys Jones (1948-1991), Berwyn Prys Jones (b. 1951), Meirion Prys Jones (b. 1954) and Rhoslyn Prys (née Prys Jones, 1957).

Appointed a Welsh-language organiser for Glamorgan, his office was situated in Cardiff but his main area of work concerned west Glamorgan. A year later, following his appointment to a similar position in Carmarthenshire, he moved his family to Llangadog to live. During this time the publishers Hodder and Stoughton invited his friend J. T. Bowen, a teacher of Welsh at Aberdare Boys' Grammar School, to produce the first edition of *Teach Yourself Welsh* (1960), which they co-wrote. The book proved to be so successful in sales terms that it persuaded the publishers to publish its subsequent sister volume *Teach Yourself Irish*.

After four years in Carmarthenshire, he was appointed principal lecturer in Welsh at Cartrefle College of Education in Wrexham, as successor to the well-known Welsh-language writer [T. Hughes Jones](#). He and his family settled in Gresford where he took over the editorship of Yr Athro ('The Teacher'), the journal of Undeb Athrawon Cymreig (1960-64). Following the death of J. T. Bowen, he prepared a new version of *Teach Yourself Welsh* entitled *Teach Yourself Living Welsh* (1977).

He took early retirement due to his wife's poor state of health, and he and Stella moved to Creigiau near Cardiff. After Stella died, he married Eilonwy Jenkins, a music teacher and deputy head teacher at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llanhari. He moved to live in Groes-faen and there, with his wife's assistance, he produced his final version of *Teach Yourself Welsh* (1991).

Following unsuccessful heart surgery, T. J. Rhys Jones died on 24 May 1997 at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. His remains were cremated at Thornhill Crematorium in Cardiff and his ashes were buried with Stella's in the crematorium cemetery.

Author

Dafydd Johnston

Sources

Personal information provided by Berwyn Prys Jones

Additional Links

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