

## EVANS, WILLIAM (1869 - 1948), minister (Congl.) and missionary in Madagascar;

**Name:** William Evans  
**Date of birth:** 1869  
**Date of death:** 1948  
**Spouse:** Phoebe Joyce Evans (née Hall)  
**Spouse:** Margaret Evans (née Williams)  
**Parent:** Mary Evans  
**Parent:** Thomas Evans  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** minister (Congl.) and missionary  
**Area of activity:** Religion  
**Author:** Ieuan Samuel Jones

Born 31 October 1869 in Y Meysydd, Landore, Swansea, son of Thomas and Mary Evans. His father owned a small mine in the area. His mother was a member of the same Sunday school as [Griffith John](#), China and he set his mind on serving in that country. His brother David was ordained minister in Rehoboth (Congl.), Brynmawr, in 1871. William was educated at the private school run by his minister, W.S. Jenkins, and he afterwards attended St. Helen's Road Board School, Swansea. He worked for a while as weigher at his father's mine before being apprenticed as a chemist. He began preaching under the ministry of [G. Pennar Griffiths](#). He was a student in [Walcyn Wyn](#)'s Gwynfryn School, Ammanford, and then went to Plymouth college (which later transferred to Bristol). He was accepted by the London Missionary Society to serve in Madagascar in 1898, and was ordained at Siloam, Pentre-estyll, Swansea, 18 and 19 June 1899. He married Margaret, daughter of Reverend R.E. Williams, Ynys-lwyd (Bapt.), Aberdare. On his arrival in Madagascar at the end of 1899 he was appointed minister of Ambatonakanga in the capital, a church established by [David Jones](#) of Neuadd-lwyd. Apart from some journeys to the north on behalf of the Society he spent his career serving churches - which numbered 57 at one time - in the capital, Antananarivo, and the surrounding districts. His early years on the island were dangerous and difficult because of the rebellion (1900-01) when many Christians and some missionaries were killed, but after this troubled time passed, Evans was particularly successful. He mastered the language to such an extent that he was invited to train preachers in oratory in the united college, this in addition to serving the London Missionary Society as director of the Imerina churches. He accomplished outstanding work bringing order to the life of churches young in the faith. His wife died in June 1914 and he married in August 1918 a missionary with the Society of Friends, Phoebe Joyce Hall, a native of Penarth, a niece of Silvester Horne. He also carried out important work as secretary of the Intermissionary Congress of Protestant Missions from 1913 onwards. He published a new Malagasy translation of *Pilgrim's Progress* (the first translation was that by [David Johns](#), 1796 - 1843 and a revised edition of the Malagasy Bible to celebrate the centenary of the first translation in 1835. His masterpiece, however, was the Malagasy Biblical dictionary based on Hastings *Encyclopaedia*, a task which occupied Evans and his colleague, Reverend Henri Randzavola, for 21 years. One of the difficulties of this work was the need to create a theological vocabulary in a language lacking such a tradition. He edited Malagasy journals, e.g. *Teny Soa* ('Good words') and *Impanolo Tsaina* ('Counsellor'), all of which, together with other editorial work, reveal his mastery of the language.

He retired as a missionary at the end of 1936. He died in Swansea 1 July 1948 and was buried in Bethel cemetery, Sketty.

### Author

Reverend Ieuan Samuel Jones

### Sources

D. Brinley Pugh, *Triawd yr Ynys* (1954)(1954), 9-32

*The Congregational Year Book*, 1949, 498

correspondence, etc., Mission Office, T John Penry, Swansea

*Tywysydd y Plant*, September 1941

### Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q20734613](#)

Published date: 2001

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).

