

## HARKER, EDWARD ('Isnant'; 1866 - 1969), quarryman, poet and preacher (Congl.)

**Name:** Edward Harker  
**Pseudonym:** Isnant  
**Date of birth:** 1866  
**Date of death:** 1969  
**Spouse:** Jennie Harker (née McGreggor)  
**Parent:** Sarah Ann Harker  
**Parent:** John Harker  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** quarryman, poet and preacher (Congl.)  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Eisteddfod; Poetry; Religion  
**Author:** Evan David Jones

Born 9 July 1866 at Nant-isaf (from which he took his bardic name), Bwlch-nant-yr-heyrn, Llanrwst, Denbighshire, the fifth of nine children (5 daughters and 4 sons) of John and Sarah Ann Harker. His great-grandfather, James Harker, had moved from Lancashire to work in the leadmine at Nant in the middle of the eighteenth century, but the family had come from Cornwall originally. He received only three weeks of formal schooling at the British School, Llanrwst, before going to work in the leadmines when he was nine. His father took an interest in writing poetry and he was a neighbour and friend of the poet-tailor **Trebor Mai** (Robert Williams, 1830 - 1877 and it was said that he made Isnant's first suit. However he died when Isnant was 11 so it is unlikely that he had any great influence on the young boy. **Gwilym Cowlyd** (William John Roberts had only recently set up Gorsedd Geirionydd and a series of *eisteddfodau* on the banks of Llyn Geirionydd and it is against this background that the boy took seriously to learning the cynganeddion, mastering the handbook *Yr Ysgol Farddol* by **Dafydd Morganwg** (David Watkin Jones, and to competing in *eisteddfodau*.

After giving up work at Nant, he worked for 15 years at Craig Ddu quarry at Blaenau Ffestiniog and for a further 15 years on the Gwydir estate. After this he worked at Cae Coch quarry, Trefriw. He retired in 1933. He composed many poems in the standard Welsh metres and won many prizes, 3 chairs, a crown and a gold medal, in *eisteddfodau*.

He contributed regularly to the poetry column of *Y Tyst* and to Welsh periodicals. A hymn by him is included in *Llawlyfr Moliant (B)*. He was a deacon in Ebeneser, Congregational chapel, Llanrwst and, after that was closed, at Ebeneser, Trefriw. To celebrate his hundredth birthday in 1966, Ebeneser, Trefriw published a collection of his poetry entitled *Canmlwydd Isnant*. He was a recognised lay preacher in his denomination within North Arfon for many years, giving acceptable service to the churches of the Conwy valley.

He married Jennie McGreggor in about 1910 and they lived at Tŷ Mawr between Trefriw and Llanrwst. She was the daughter of a forester on the Gwydir estate and she died in 1933. About 1950 Isnant went to live with his niece at Llanrwst. He became blind towards the end of his life but with his remarkable memory he was able to dictate his poems to his fellow-deacon, Gwilym Roberts, so that he could write them down. He recited his *cywydd* on the Conwy Valley to his niece Daisy Roberts and her husband, when he was 98. Two of his brothers had emigrated to search for gold in Denver, Colorado. He died 15 March 1969 and was buried at the public cemetery, Trefriw.

### Author

**Evan David Jones**, (1903 - 1987)

### Sources

Information from his niece, Daisy J. Roberts  
*Y Tyst*, 24 April 1969, and *Y Genhinen*, 1969

### Additional Links

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