

HARRIS, WILLIAM HENRY (1884 - 1956), priest, Professor of Welsh, St. David's College, Lampeter

Name: William Henry Harris
Date of birth: 1884
Date of death: 1956
Spouse: Dorothy Harris (née Clough)
Parent: Anne Harris
Parent: John Harris
Gender: Male
Occupation: priest, Professor of Welsh, St. David's College, Lampeter
Area of activity: Education; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Mary Gwendoline Ellis

Born 28 April 1884 at Pantysgallog, Dowlais, Glamorganshire, son of John and Anne Harris. He was educated at Merthyr Tydfil County School and St. David's College, Lampeter where he was Treharne and Senior Scholar, and English and Welsh (Creaton) Essay Prizeman. He graduated B.A. first-class honours in Welsh 1910, and proceeded to Jesus College Oxford as Meyrick Research Scholar in 1910. He gained a B.Litt. degree and the Powis Exhibition in 1913. In the same year he gained 2nd-class honours in Theology, B.A. 1914 and M.A. 1916. He was ordained deacon in 1913, became curate of Ystradgynlais and was ordained priest in 1914. He became assistant priest of Christ Church Swansea in 1917 and of All Saints, Oystermouth in 1918. He was appointed Lecturer in Theology in St. David's College, Lampeter, in 1919 and remained in that position until he was appointed Professor of Theology in 1940. He became Precentor in 1933 and was elected Canon of St. David's cathedral in 1937 and Treasurer in 1948. It was his appointment as Professor of Welsh in 1941 which gave him the most satisfaction. It is believed that he had been disappointed at not achieving this post earlier in his career.

He was one of the founder members of the St. David's Society which was formed to foster and establish the catholicity of the Church in Wales. He believed fervently in the Catholic faith and in the sanctity of the priesthood and no opposition could move him from his standpoint. The periodical, *St. David's Chronicle*, is better known by its later title, *The Faith in Wales: Y Ffydd yng Nghymru*. In 1931 he published penny pamphlets, *Yr Eglwys Gatholig* and *Gweinidogaeth yr Eglwys*. His commentaries on the Lesser Prophets were published by the SPCK on behalf of the Welsh Inter-Diocesan Sunday School Union between 1919-1924. He wrote on 'Gwyrthiau' in *Y Geiriadur Beiblaidd*, 1926.

He was knowledgeable in church music and was a member of the committee of *Emynau'r Eglwys* (*The Welsh Church Hymnary*) (1941, 1951) from its commencement in 1934 and was secretary from 1937. The book contains his translations of Latin and Greek hymns, as well as others from English. The book was the subject of some controversy because of its extreme Catholic standpoint. He was a member of the Liturgical Commission set up to revise the Book of Common Prayer, a director of the Llan and Welsh Church Press Company, and a member of the Provincial Press committee. He translated 'The Office of Compline' into Welsh '*Cwmplyn, Gwasanaeth diwedydd*', 1941.

His bardic name in the Gorsedd of Bards was 'Arthan'. He took a practical interest in Esperanto as a language for the League of Nations and held classes in it at the college in 1920. After his death in 1956 his revised edition of *Agoriad neu Allwedd i'r iaith gyd-Genedlaethol Esperanto* was published by G. Griffiths. The members of the St. David's College Welsh Society subscribed to its publication.

He was a popular preacher, drawing crowded congregations to St. Davids during his residence as Canon. He was twice Special Preacher at the Welsh Festival at St. Paul's Cathedral, London. As a man he appeared pale and unhealthy, with very poor eyesight, nevertheless he wrote prodigiously to periodicals and to the Welsh press. Apart from his tenaciously held religious beliefs, he was a kindly, courteous man with an unexpected sense of humour. He married in 1924 Dorothy Clough (died 22 September 1980) and they had two daughters. He died in hospital in London, 23 January 1956, aged 72 and was buried at Ruislip, Middlesex.

Author

Mary Gwendoline Ellis

Sources

Y Llan, 2 February 1956

The Church Times, 27 January 1956

Welsh Church Year Book, 1929

Who's who in Wales, (1933)

Emynau'r Eglwys (Cardiff 1951)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Harris](#)

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Published date: 2001

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