

## JAMES, DAVID EMRYS ('Dewi Emrys'; 1881 - 1952), minister (Congl.), writer and poet

**Name:** David Emrys James  
**Pseudonym:** Dewi Emrys  
**Date of birth:** 1881  
**Date of death:** 1952  
**Spouse:** Cissie James (née Jenkins)  
**Child:** Dwynwen James  
**Parent:** Mary Ellen James (née Jones)  
**Parent:** Thomas Emrys James  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** minister (Congl.), writer and poet  
**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Poetry; Religion  
**Author:** Gerallt Jones

Born 26 May 1881 at Majorca House, New Quay, Cardiganshire, son of Thomas Emrys James, a Congl. minister in Llandudno at the time, and Mary Ellen (née Jones), his wife, the daughter of a master mariner. The mother returned to New Quay to give birth to the child who was named David Edward, but the name Emrys was adopted later. When he was 7 years old his father received a call to be pastor of Rhosycaerau church, near Fishguard, and it was there that he spent his childhood. He received his early education in Henner school in the parish of Llanwnda, W.S. Jenkins' preparatory school, and Fishguard county school. He was apprenticed as a compositor and reporter in the office of County Echo in Fishguard. In 1896 the family moved to Carmarthen, and he had an opportunity to complete his apprenticeship on The Carmarthen Journal. The editor, [Henry Tobit Evans](#) gave him every encouragement to continue to write and to recite on stage as he had done since he was young. He was made sub-editor and editor of the Welsh column of the Journal before he was 20 years old, and was released to attend the Old College School as a part-time student under [Joseph Harry](#). During this period he began to preach. He went to the Presbyterian College in 1903. He served for a short while in the Welsh Free Church, Liverpool, founded by [William Owen Jones](#), before accepting a call to Bryn Seion, Dowlais, in 1907. In 1908 he went to the English church in Buckley, Flintshire. In July of that year he married Cissie Jenkins in the English Congl. chapel in Carmarthen. He moved again in 1911 to Gelliwastad English church, Pontypridd. He was one of the most eloquent preachers of Wales before World War I; then in 1915 he became minister of Finsbury Park church in London, staying there till 1917. He joined the army, and by 1918 his name had disappeared from the Congl. Yr. Bk.

He began to lose interest in personal relationships and in his church, and spent years adrift, separated from his family — his wife and two sons. He settled down again in 1940-41 with his daughter, Dwynwen, in 'Y Bwthyn', Talgarreg, Cardiganshire, becoming a member of Pysgah Congl. church and preaching occasionally in the neighbouring districts; he remained there for the rest of his life.

A charismatic person, around whom many stories gathered, he held Welsh literature and poetry classes here and there under the auspices of the W.E.A. movement for adult education, and 'Y Bwthyn' became the haunt of poets and writers. He was one of the masters of cerdd dafod, winning among many other prizes at the national eisteddfod the crown in Swansea, 1926 (for 'Rhigymau'r ffordd fawr'), and the chair four times — Liverpool, 1929 ('Dafydd ap Gwilym'); Llanelli, 1930 ('Y Galilead'); Bangor, 1943 ('Cymylau amser'); and Bridgend, 1948 ('Yr Alltud'). He was editor of the column 'Pabell awen' in Y Cymro from 1936 to 1952.

He died at Aberystwyth hospital on 20 September 1952, and was buried in Pysgah cemetery, Talgarreg. A memorial stone for him was also erected above the cliffs of Pwllderi, north Pembrokeshire.

Much of his work has been published: *Rhigymau'r ffordd fawr* (1926), *Rhymes of the road* (1928), *Y cwm unig a chaniadau eraill* (1930), *Ysgrifau* (1937), *Odl a chynganedd* (a textbook on cerdd dafod; 1938), *Beirdd y babel* (ed.; 1939), *Cerddi'r bwthyn* (1948), and poetry pamphlets: *Y gwron di-enw* (poem at the eisteddfod in Anglesey; 1922), *Atgof* (second best poem at Pontypool; 1924), *Y gân ni chanwyd* (second best poem at Liverpool, 1929), *Daniel Owen* (awdl in the London eisteddfod; 1936).

### Author

Reverend Gerallt Jones, (1907 - 1984)

### Sources

Eluned Phillips, *Dewi Emrys (Llandysul 1971)*;

T. Llew Jones, *Dewi Emrys (1981)*.

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Dewi Emrys](#) 

## Additional Links

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