

JONES, THOMAS GWYNN (1871 - 1949), poet, writer, translator and scholar

Name: Thomas Gwynn Jones

Date of birth: 1871

Date of death: 1949

Spouse: Margaret Jane Jones (née Davies)

Child: Eluned Jones (née Jones)

Parent: Jane Jones (née Roberts)

Parent: Isaac Jones

Gender: Male

Occupation: poet, writer, translator and scholar

Area of activity: Education; Eisteddfod; History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages

Authors: Arthur ap Gwynn, Francis Wynn Jones

Born in Gwyndy Uchaf, Betws yn Rhos, Denbighshire, 10 October 1871, eldest child of Isaac and Jane Jones. His father was a farmer and also a lay-preacher with the Calvinistic Methodist and a poet. The son began to add Gwynn (from Gwyndy) to his simple baptismal name Thomas about 1890 when, among other pen-names, he used Gwyn(n)vre ap Iwan (or ap Isaac). Apart from elementary education in Llanelian, Old Colwyn and Denbigh, and some instruction in Latin, Greek and mathematics from a neighbouring retired clergyman (to seek admittance to Oxford University, which did not prove possible because of ill-health), T. Gwynn Jones was self-taught. In 1891 he joined the staff of *Y Faner* under **Thomas Gee** and he remained in journalism until 1909. He left Denbigh in 1893 to join the staff of *Y Cymro* in Liverpool under **Isaac Foulkes** but returned to Denbigh in 1895 as sub-editor of *Y Faner* and to assist with **Gee's** recently established *North Wales Times*. He went to Caernarfon in 1898 to *Yr Herald Cymraeg*, *Papur Pawb* and the *Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald*. He fell ill in 1905 and spent some time in Egypt where he did some free-lance work in English. On his return in 1906 he lived in Denbigh, writing for newspapers, especially for *Papur Pawb*. In 1907 he went to Mold as editor of *Y Cymro*, then to Caernarfon in 1908 to the offices of *Yr Herald* and *Papur Pawb* before joining the staff of *Y Genedl Gymreig*.

In 1909 he was appointed a cataloguer at the National Library and spent the rest of his life in Aberystwyth and its neighbourhood. He was appointed a lecturer in Welsh at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1913, and promoted to the Gregynog Chair in Welsh literature in 1919 - its only occupant ever - which he held until his retirement in 1937. He married in June 1899 Margaret Jane Davies: they had a daughter and 2 sons. He died at his home in Aberystwyth 7 March 1949 aged 77 and was buried in Aberystwyth cemetery.

T. Gwynn Jones was influenced by **Emrys ap Iwan** (R. Ambrose Jones), early in his career and inspired to look beyond the 19th c. for the foundations of Welsh literature. **Ap Iwan** strengthened his interest in languages and awoke in him the desire to look further than England for literature to read and study. Before the end of the 19th c. he was also influenced by **Daniel Rees** (1855 - 1931). Jones's memorial essay in *Cymeriadau* (1933) reveals the close relationship and mutual influence of two remarkable men. Jones's interests in the Celtic languages was awoken in his early years, perhaps by his sympathy with the Irish struggle for Home Rule in the 1880s, and his interest in Ireland was deepened in 3 visits in 1892, 1908 and 1913, the last two affording him an opportunity to meet a number of scholars and writers who became close friends. These interests and contacts are reflected in *Iwerddon* (1919), *Peth nas lleddir* (1921), *Awen y Gwyddy* (1922) and in many essays.

He obtained an M.A. (Wales) in 1914 for his dissertation 'Bardism and Romance'. His other main academic publications were: *Gwaith Tudur Aled* (1926), the fruits of many years' work; a detailed introduction to *Dwyfol Gân Dante*, **Daniel Rees's** translation of *Divina Commedia* (1903); *Cofiant Emrys ap Iwan* (1912); *Cofiant Thomas Gee* (1913); *Llenyddiaeth y Cymry* (1915) - vol. 1 only, to the Tudor period; *Traethodau* (1910); *Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg* (1920); *Cultural Bases* (1921); *Welsh Folklore and Folk-custom* (1930, 2 ed. 1979).

He began writing poetry about the mid-1880s, mainly in the strict metres and many of his first efforts, including prize-winning local *eisteddfod* entries, were published in *Y Faner* and the *Abergele Visitor*, but his first separate publication was *Dyddiau'r Parch. Richard Owen* (1891), a booklet about half of which was the work of 'Gwynvra ap Iwan' and the rest by 'Gwilym Meredydd' (Reverend W.M. Jones). His satire 'Gwlad y Gân' appeared in *Cymru* (two cantos in 1896 and 1897) and in *Papur Pawb* (three cantos in 1898). This was his first substantial poem, and was later published in *Gwlad y Gân a Chaniadau Eraill* (1902). **W.J. Gruffydd** in 1949 referred to the poem as *juvenilia* but recalled its effect on him as a thunderbolt. In 1902 also his poem 'Ymadawiad Arthur' won the chair at the Bangor national *eisteddfod*, under the adjudication of **John Morris-Jones**, a poem which secured for him a unique place in the emerging world of new Welsh poetry. He again won the chair at the national *eisteddfod* in 1909 for his poem 'Gwlad y Bryniau'. The 1902 poem was published in 1910, *Ymadawiad Arthur a Chaniadau Eraill*, but 'Gwlad y Bryniau' was not published again until the two *eisteddfod* poems and others appeared in the Gregynog Press selection *Detholiad o Ganiadau* (1926). This contained a number of Jones's well-known poems both old and new, e.g., 'Tir na n'Og' (1 ed. 1916); 'Madog' (1918, in *Y Beirniad*); 'Broseliàwnd' (1922); 'Anatomaros' (1925); 'Gwlad Hud' (1919-25). His main works, prose and verse, were collected and published in 6 vols. by Hughes & Son, Wrexham, between 1932 and 1937. *Caniadau* (1934) contains more or less the same works as the Gregynog *Detholiad* but with the addition of 'Argoed' (1927), while *Manion* (1932) contains the poet's personal selection of the rest of his poetry. He continued to write, however, and under the name 'Rhufawn' he published in *Yr Efrwydd* in 1935-36 a number of poems, including 'Cynddilig', considered among the finest of his works. These poems were published in *Y Dwymyn* (1944).

His many translations combine his genius as a poet and his scholarly gifts. He translated works from many European languages, the best known being *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, *Papur Pawb*, 1902, separate publication 1942), *Dychweledigion* (*Die Gjengångere*, Ibsen, 1920), *Faust* (Goethe, 1922). His main translation from Welsh to English was *Visions of the sleeping bard* (*Gweledigaethau y Bardd Cwsc*, **Ellis Wynne**, Gregynog Press, 1940). In addition he published novels, plays, a travel book (*Y Môr Canoldir a'r Aifft*, 1913), reminiscences (*Brithgofion*, 1944), two books of children's verses (*Llyfr Gwion Bach*, 1924, *Llyfr Nia Fach*, 1932) and a variety of other works. Over a long period he wrote and translated words to be set to music. He was a regular adjudicator at the national *eisteddfod* from 1908 and was unflinching in his support as an

adjudicator and lecturer at other *eisteddfodau* and societies. As a teacher he influenced generations of students. Upon his retirement in 1937 he was awarded hon. D. Litt. degrees by the two universities closest to his heart - Wales and Ireland - and made a C.B.E.

A special memorial number of *Y Llenor* (28, 2) was published in 1949. There is a good bibliography to 1937 in Owen Williams, *A bibliography of Thomas Gwynn Jones* (1938), with a supplement by David Thomas (1956). Both are now superseded by D. Hywel E. Roberts, *Llyfryddiaeth Thomas Gwynn Jones* (1981).

Authors

Arthur ap Gwynn

Francis Wynn Jones, (1898 - 1970)

Sources

Personal knowledge and the sources noted

David Jenkins, *Thomas Gwynn Jones Cofiant gan David Jenkins* (Denbigh 1973)

W. Beynon Davies, *Thomas Gwynn Jones* (Cardiff 1970)

D. Hywel E. Roberts, *Llyfryddiaeth Thomas Gwynn Jones* (Cardiff 1981), 219-78

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [T. Gwynn Jones](#)

Images

NLW: John Williams (Y Foel), T. Gwyn Jones, Robert Griffiths [and] J. J. Evans

NLW: T. Gwynn Jones ar y cei yn Caernarfon

NLW: T. Gwynn Jones prif westai pabell awen "Y Cymro", Dinbych, 1939

NLW: Y meistr -- T. Gwynn Jones yn Eisteddfod Bae Colwyn

NLW: Thomas Gwynn Jones ganed ym Metws-yn-Rhos, Sir Ddinbych, 1871, bu farw yn Aberystwyth, 1949

Howard Lloyd Roberts, Professor T. Gwynn Jones

NLW: T. Gwynn Jones and others, Shizeh Pyramids, Egypt

NLW: Mrs. Jane Jones

Additional Links

NLW Archives: NLW MS 24174E: Llythyrau T. Gwynn Jones at R. S. Rowlands

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