

LLOYD, Sir JOHN EDWARD (1861 - 1947), historian, and first editor of *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*

Name: John Edward Lloyd
Date of birth: 1861
Date of death: 1947
Spouse: Clementina Lloyd (née Miller)
Child: Eluned Jones (née Lloyd)
Parent: Mary Lloyd (née Jones)
Parent: Edward Lloyd
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian, and first editor of *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 5 May 1861 in Liverpool, son of Edward Lloyd, J.P., and Mary Lloyd (née Jones). The family's ancestral home was Penygarnedd, near Pen-y-bont-fawr in Montgomeryshire, and J.E. Lloyd never lost his feeling for this background nor his affection for the area. He was, at first, intended for the Congregationalist ministry, and for a considerable time he was a lay preacher in the denomination. It was natural that he should take a prominent part in the Historical Society of the Welsh Congregationalists when it was founded; and it was very natural too - and to him a subject of immense pride - that he should be elevated Chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents for 1934-35.

He went to college at Aberystwyth, and from there in 1881 to Lincoln College, Oxford. In 1883 he succeeded in obtaining a First in Honours Classical Moderations, and in 1885 he was placed in the First Class in the final examination in History. His career at Oxford was, thus, nearing its completion before the time of the famous group of Oxford Welshmen (like **Owen M. Edwards** who went up in October 1884), and it was over before the Dafydd ap Gwilym Society was established in 1886; but of course, he very quickly associated himself with their aspirations. Indeed, in a sense he had anticipated them, for already in 1884, when he was only halfway through his degree course, he had won the prize, at the Liverpool national eisteddfod, for a handbook on the history of Wales to 1282, an essay which was published in the *Transactions* of that eisteddfod.

He returned to Aberystwyth in 1885 as lecturer in Welsh and History. He remained there until 1892, and it was there, in 1889, that he prepared for the press *The Ancient Laws of Wales*, a volume written by **Hubert Lewis** (who had died in 1884). But in 1892 Lloyd moved to Bangor as the registrar of the University College of North Wales and assistant to Principal Reichel in the department of History. Later on he used to describe humorously (but hardly strictly correctly) how he divided his workday at that time 'lecturer in the morning, registrar in the afternoon, and researcher in the evening'. He was an exact and organized registrar; he was remarkably prudent and patient, and as his experience grew he became an exceedingly useful committee member; there was none better at wording a resolution or an official document. He was thereafter a member of all kinds of committees in Wales (until the deafness of his later years affected his ability to respond in discussion). He was particularly useful when the University of Wales was reorganized in 1919; it was he, for instance, who drew up the constitution of its Board of Celtic Studies, and he served as its chairman until 1940. He was prominent in the activities of the Cambrian Archaeological Association and was twice its President. Reference has already been made to his prominence in the conferences of his denomination. And on no account should his service to the Society for the Utilization of the Welsh Language be forgotten; he used to lecture in its summer schools for teachers and he wrote for it bilingual textbooks on Welsh history. He also played a part in the National Eisteddfod Association.

He continued as registrar of the college at Bangor until 1919, but he had already succeeded Reichel in the chair of History in 1899. This was the beginning of the most productive period of his career, the period that raised him to his true fame. He wrote regularly to the academic journals on topics in the history of Wales. In 1911 he produced his great standard work, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, which reached its third edition in 1939. It is no exaggeration to claim that this book was a turning-point in the study of Welsh history; it was the fruit of a thorough assessment of the sources, and a clear and readable exposition of the course of the history of the Age of the Princes. A few details were corrected by him (mainly in the *Bulletin* of the Board of Celtic Studies) and by other researchers, but the body of the work remains authoritative to this day. It brought him the degree of D. Litt., Oxford, 1918. In 1930 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy (F.B.A.), and it was to that body that he delivered his Sir John Rhŷs Lecture on *The Welsh Chronicles*, which was published in 1930 - a notable example of the nature of its author's mind.

Almost to the end, Lloyd restricted himself, in his published work, to the period on which he had begun writing as far back as 1884. But he was persuaded to move to a later period when he was elected Oxford Ford Lecturer in 1931. He chose as his subject the history of **Owain Glyn Dŵr**, and the work was published under the title *Owain Glendower* (the title was chosen by the press) in 1931. Once again the author's characteristics can be seen - the detailed scrutiny of sources and the clear narrative of the history of **Owain's** career. In 1930 he wrote a little book on the whole range of Welsh history in Benn's series, a Welsh version of which was published by Aberystwyth Press in 1943 under the title *Golwg ar hanes Cymru*. It would be a great mistake to assume that Lloyd was not truly well-versed in the history of his country after 1415. One need only glance at the collection of notes kept in the library of the University of Wales, Bangor, to see how extensive was his interest in the later periods, as was his knowledge of details (often very obscure). This information, the fruits of what he called 'pottering', was always available to inquirers both within the college and outside. Indeed, he had long grown to be the oracle, as it were, on the whole history of Wales; and to him everyone turned for advice and guidance in this field. He was, thus, the inevitable choice as editor of *The History of Carmarthenshire* in 1935. And when the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion decided in 1937 to undertake the preparation and publication of *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* he was invited to be editor and it was he who brought the project to the notice of the nation in a public meeting in Cardiff in 1938. It was rightly held that his name and reputation would guarantee the standard of the work.

He had extensive experience of this kind of work as he had contributed from 1893 to 1912 some 120 essays on famous Welshmen to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He began his new task immediately: selecting names to be included and authors to write the essays, and he himself wrote over 60 essays under the first letters of the

alphabet. But war broke out; the arrangements were postponed; and when it became safe to take up the task again in 1943, he felt that he could not now be involved with the correspondence and proof-reading and he chose to be called the Consultative Editor. But the consultation was by no means in name only, for he met weekly for some time after with his successor to review the progress of the work and to make valuable suggestions; and of course the work continued by his two successors, as far as possible, along the lines which he himself had drawn up.

But his health was now deteriorating, and he died on 20 June 1947. He was buried in the old cemetery at Llandysilio, on the island opposite Menai Bridge. He had been awarded many honours: knighted in 1934; honorary degree of D. Litt. of the Universities of Wales (1922) and of Manchester, and the freedom of the city of Bangor in 1941. He had a strong constitution and pleasant features: his stance was dignified when he addressed an audience, his voice clear and his language, whether in English or in Welsh, correct and formal, and he was always neatly dressed. He had been brought up in the heyday of the Victorian age and there is no doubt that the ideals of that age formed (or coloured) to a large extent his public conduct and his style of writing. He never sought to be 'popular', either on a platform or on paper. Consequently he was considered by some to be a 'distant' and formal person - and certainly he was not one with whom people dared to be overfamiliar. But in more intimate circles he was free, not infrequently humorous. Nevertheless, his dignity and refinement were always to the fore.

He married Clementina Miller of Aberdeen, a former pupil of his at Aberystwyth, in 1893; she died in 1951. They were survived by a daughter and a son.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

J. Goronwy Edwards in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1955, and also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 1941-50

Thomas Richards, 'Syr John Lloyd: Atgofion amdano,' *Y Llenor: cylchgrawn chwarterol dan nawdd cymdeithasau Cymraeg y colegau cenedlaethol*, October 1947, pp.67-76

information from his daughter, Mrs. Eluned Garmon Jones

personal knowledge

A long, but incomplete, list of Sir John's writings on very diverse subjects, not historical only, is in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, May 1948, 96-105

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Edward Lloyd](#)

Works

J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*(London 1911), Vol. I

J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*(London 1911), Vol. II

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