

SKAIFE, Sir ERIC OMMANNEY (1884 - 1956), brigadier and patron of Welsh culture

Name: Eric Ommanney Skaife
Date of birth: 1884
Date of death: 1956
Parent: Josephine Skaife
Parent: Frederic Skaife
Gender: Male
Occupation: brigadier and patron of Welsh culture
Area of activity: History and Culture; Military; Philanthropy
Author: Evan David Jones

Born 18 October 1884, son of Frederic and Josephine Skaife, Chichester, Sussex. He was educated at Winchester College, and Sandhurst. He joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers as a 2nd. lieutenant in 1903. During World War I he served in France, and while a prisoner in Germany he began to learn Welsh and improved his Russian. He became a major in 1918 and served in the War Office and in Waziristan before returning to the Welch Fusiliers as lieutenant colonel in 1929. From 1934 to 1937 he was military attaché in Moscow, and subsequently commander of the Welch Territorial Brigade, before joining the research department of the Foreign Office, 1941-44. He was author of *A Short history of the Royal Welch Fusiliers* (1924). He retired to Crogen mansion in Merionethshire, later residing at Dolserau, Dolgellau. He was an ardent eisteddfodwr and took a keen interest in Welsh culture. He was received as a member of the Gorsedd and was elected a vice-president of Urdd Gobaith Cymru in 1942. In 1946 he presented five harps, known as 'the Crogen harps' to the Urdd for young harpists to learn their craft. His Welsh speeches were unadulterated with English words, but he was not a fluent speaker and his Welsh had a strong English accent. As soon as Welsh books and periodicals came from the press he bought them and built up a large library. He was a member of the governing board of the Church in Wales and chairman of the Merioneth Conservative Society. He served as Deputy Lieutenant of the county, and was High Sheriff in 1956, the year he was knighted. He died, unmarried. 1 October 1956, in Largos, while attending the Mod in Scotland as a delegate from the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd. On his gravestone in St. Mark's churchyard, Brithdir, is a couplet in Welsh ('My heart was in Wales/ And in her soil are my remains').

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Who was who?

R. E. Griffith, *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (Aberystwyth 1971-73), 1 (1971), 262-4

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