

THOMAS, EVAN ROBERT (1891 - 1964), joiner and leader of the Welsh in Australia

Name: Evan Robert Thomas
Date of birth: 1891
Date of death: 1964
Spouse: Gwladys B. Thomas (née Davies)
Parent: Jane Thomas
Parent: Robert E. Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: joiner and leader of the Welsh in Australia
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Travel and Exploration
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Born 8 January 1891 at Yspty Ifan, Denbighshire, son of Robert E. Thomas and Jane his wife, but the family moved to Trefriw, Caernarfonshire, and he was educated in Llanrwst county school. He emigrated to Australia c. 1908. He was a joiner and a noted craftsman and many of his fine wooden panels are in the public buildings of Melbourne.

He knew the problems facing an immigrant and made a practice of meeting every ship arriving from Britain to ensure that any Welshman who landed had a place to go. He was an enthusiastic and indefatigable worker among the Welsh people. When he was secretary (1932-58) of the Cambrian Society which met once a month in St. David's Hall, Latrobe Street, Melbourne, the membership increased from about 30 to over 3000; he was president of the society 1958-59. He contributed a column to the society's magazine, *The Cambrian*, while it existed (1939-46), and to *The Welsh Australian* before that (1938-39). He served as secretary of the Union of Welsh Societies from 1932 and, as secretary (1934-53) of St. David's Day Association, he organised the annual celebrations, being president in 1955. He kept in contact with Wales : he was elected vice-president of 'Welsh People in Exile' (Wales and the World) in 1960 and a vice-president of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in 1957. He married, 7 August 1915, Gwladys B. Davies, Maryborough. They had five children and lived in Ael-y-bryn, 77 Murray Street, Caulfield, Victoria. He died 6 September 1964 and his funeral service was held in the Welsh chapel, Latrobe Street. He was buried in the new Cheltenham cemetery.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

Who's who in Australia, 1962

Myfi Williams, *Cymry Awstralia* (1961), 160-3

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1964, part ii, 350

The Age (Australian paper), 7 September 1964

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