

GRIFFITH, HUW WYNNE (1915-1993), minister (Presb) and a prominent ecumenical leader

Name: Huw Wynne Griffith
Date of birth: 1915
Date of death: 1993
Spouse: Mair Griffith (née Benson-Evans)
Child: Gwawr Griffith
Child: Ann Griffith
Child: Nia Higgingsbotham (née Griffith)
Parent: Grace Wynne Griffith (née Roberts)
Parent: Griffith Wynne Griffith
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Presb) and a prominent ecumenical leader
Area of activity: Religion
Author: D. Ben Rees

Born 6 December 1915 in Liverpool, he was the second son of [Revd Griffith Wynne Griffith](#) (1883-1967), minister of Douglas Road Welsh Chapel in Anfield and [Grace Wynn Griffith \(née Roberts\)](#), 1883-1963). His siblings were [Dr Gwilym Wynne Griffith](#) (1914-1989), Medical Officer of Health for Anglesey and an eminent epidemiologist, Elizabeth Grace (Betty) Hunter (1921-2007), a social worker; and Douglas (1918-1918). Huw Wynne Griffith was educated in Liverpool before the family moved in 1923 to Porthmadog, where he attended the local primary school and Porthmadog County School, then in Friars School, Bangor (when his father became minister of Tabernacl church, Bangor), University College of North Wales, Bangor (where he graduated with a BA in Latin), Westminster College, Cambridge where he gained his MA. During this period (1941-4) he became Secretary and then President of the Missionary Society of Westminster College. He spent a year at Bala Theological College where he completed his BD.

Ordained in 1945 he served the chapels of Bethania, Ferryside and Seion, Llan-saint, Carmarthenshire (1945-51) and Siloh (Seilo) Presbyterian Church of Wales, Aberystwyth (1951-1983), Ceredigion. He married Mair Benson-Evans (1918-2003), daughter of Dr and Mrs Benson-Evans, Prestatyn on 4 July 1945 in Rehoboth Chapel, Prestatyn and three daughters were born to them, Nia in 1947, Ann in 1949 and Gwawr in 1956. From his college days Huw Wynne Griffith had been heavily involved in the ecumenical witness. He served from 1939 to 1941 as the General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement (SCM), and represented Wales at the Christian Youth Conference in Amsterdam in August 1939. He represented the Presbyterian Church of Wales at the Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches in Lund, Sweden in 1952. In the 1950s he edited *Yr Efydydd* and he also became Secretary of the three, later the four, nonconformist denominations' discussions on church unity. H. W. Griffith was invited to become Chairman of the Welsh Ecumenical Society in 1954.

In the 1960s he was undoubtedly one of the most prominent leaders of the ecumenical witness within Wales. He served the Committee which prepared the Faith and Order plan of the Welsh Council of Churches (1963-64), and then became the Secretary of the Joint Committee of the Covenanting Churches of Wales (1965-68), responsible for the reports which were produced and published in 1968 and in 1971. H. W. Griffith was elected Vice-President of the Welsh Council of Churches (1966-68) and President from 1968 to 1972. He was energetic within the Church and Society Committee and its Secretary in the early 1970s. Within his own denomination Huw Wynne Griffith was known in the three Associations as a committed ecumenical worker and he was given a great deal of responsibility within the Board for Church Unity. He represented the Presbyterian Church of Wales in the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya in 1975. He was active in ecumenical activities in west Wales and joint founder of *Ecwmene Ceredigion*, a forum for young people.

He laid stress on the social gospel, and he was heavily involved throughout the years, locally and nationally, with Christian Aid, Shelter and other organisations dealing with poverty and social injustice. He gave supported the Anti-Apartheid group in Aberystwyth, Amnesty International and Ockenden Venture as well as many other pressure groups. He welcomed children of refugees from Germany to enjoy the facilities of the Aberystwyth and he extended the hand of friendship to refugees from communist Hungary during the uprising of 1956. He and his wife Mair and their family gave shelter and comfort to many in their distress and crisis and they were concerned about the well being of students who came to the colleges in Aberystwyth, hundreds of whom were made at home in Bethseilun Manse, which stood next door to the handsome chapel (which has since been demolished). It was always a pleasure to attend a service at Siloh when the minister was in his pulpit and Charles Clements was at the organ.

Huw Wynne Griffith had a likeable personality and he was very well liked in his community and in the activities of his denomination and the ecumenical scene. He influenced many by his thoughtful, contemporary preaching, by his articles in

the Welsh-language press, in particular Y Goleuad, Y Traethodydd, Porfeydd, Ecwmene, Y Genhinen and Barn where he often wrote on controversial subjects. He wrote with sensitivity and respect, preparing his articles carefully. He prepared a commentary for Sunday schools on the *Gospel of Mark* in 1953, a book of stories for children, *Gyda'r Iesu* (1961), and his Davies Lecture to the General Assembly of the Connexion, on 'C F Andrews, Friend of Mahatma Gandhi and a Pioneer of missionary work' was published in 1978. He prepared an article for the volume *Rhyddid ac Undeb* (1963) and material for a handbook on Prayer in 1991.

A notable characteristic of his personality was his readiness to listen attentively to people, to learn from them and to be positive in his statements. The Church and Society Board of the Presbyterian Church of Wales profited from his knowledge, his intellect and his searching and honest questions and answers to difficult moral questions. He consecrated his life to the philosophy of non-violence. During the Second World War he was a conscientious objector, and both he and his wife were witnesses to their belief in peace, disarmament and justice. He was often, almost daily, to be seen in the 1950s and 1960s, on his bike in the town of Aberystwyth, visiting his flock. He was very disciplined in his work, following a pattern of prayer, meditation, Bible reading, studying, preparing sermons and articles, visiting hospitals and the sick and attending committees and meetings.

He had many attractive features - a kind word, though quiet and humble in his ways. He died 20 March 1993 at Bronglais General Hospital Aberystwyth from acute emphysema, a disease which he had suffered greatly but with courage and dignity. His funeral, conducted by his minister, Revd Pryderi Llwyd Jones, was on 25 March 1993 in Morfa Chapel, Portland Street, Aberystwyth. Tributes were paid to him by Revd Erastus Jones and Principal Elfed ap Nefydd Roberts, two who had been involved with Huw Wynne Griffith in the ecumenical movement. He was laid to rest in Aberystwyth Plasgrug cemetery.

The poet Gwilym Roberts summed up his contribution in an englyn inscribed on his gravestone:

Huw fu byw i wella'n byd
Ufudd was fu i Dduw drwy'i fywyd.

[Huw lived to make our world a better place,
An obedient servant to God throughout his life.]

Author

D. Ben Rees

Sources

F. Wynn Jones, *Canmlwydd Siloh Aberystwyth* (1963);

The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard, 9 April 1993;

personal knowledge;

valuable information from his three daughters, and in particular the notes from Nia Higgingsbotham, Llandudno;

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1951-1970, p.82 for details on his parents.

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