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## HUGHES, JOHN WILLIAMS (1888-1979), Baptist minister and college principal



**Name:** John Williams Hughes  
**Date of birth:** 1888  
**Date of death:** 1979  
**Spouse:** Margaret Hughes (née Evans)  
**Child:** David Hughes  
**Child:** Edward Hughes  
**Child:** Ieuan Hughes  
**Parent:** Jeremiah Lot Hughes  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Baptist minister and college principal  
**Area of activity:** Education; Religion  
**Author:** D. Hugh Matthews

John Williams Hughes was born on 6 January 1888 in Brynhyfryd, Swansea. He was the son of Jeremiah Lot Hughes, deacon, treasurer and corresponding secretary of Dinas Noddfa, Glandwr, a Welsh Baptist church on the edge of the town. His mother was one of the four daughters of the [Reverend John Williams](#), 'Iwan ap Iwan', 1800-1871) well known minister of Aberduar Baptist church, Llanybydder. He was educated in Brynhyfryd primary school and Swansea Grammar School. In 1905, he was accepted as a ministerial student in Bangor Baptist College. After graduating in the University College of Bangor in the Arts and Theology, he moved on in 1911 to Jesus College and Mansfield College, Oxford in order to pursue further theological study. He gained his degree and in 1914 was ordained minister of Dagnall Street Baptist Church in St Albans. A year later, in 1915, he married Margaret Evans, daughter of the Reverend Edward Evans, minister of Peniel Welsh Baptist church, Bangor. Three sons were born to them: Ieuan, Edward and David, the actor Hugh David.

J. Williams Hughes suffered a severe bout of ill-health in 1918 and he was forced to abandon his ministry in St Albans, returning to Wales to an open-air life, keeping chickens in a small-holding near Barmouth in Merionethshire. By 1920 his health had improved sufficiently for him to begin preaching again and he took oversight of the small Baptist church in Barmouth. In 1924 he accepted a call to pastor the English-language Baptist church in Alfred Place, Aberystwyth and two years later he was called to the joint-pastorate of Tabernacl Welsh Baptist church in Cardiff, alongside the elderly [Charles Davies](#). In 1936, after ten years as pastor of Tabernacl, he accepted an invitation to return to the Baptist College in Bangor as tutor in New Testament Greek and New Testament Studies, teaching also in Bangor University Faculty of Theology. He became Principal of the Baptist College in 1943. He served the College in Bangor until his retirement at the age of 71 when he moved back to Cardiff, moving again, some years later, to live in Windsor near to his youngest son, David.

John Williams Hughes was known chiefly as a preacher and for the quiet, conversational style which he adopted as a result of his illness. He was called upon to preach on many important occasions such as the Baptist Missionary Society's valedictory for departing missionaries in Bloomsbury in 1938, the main missionary meeting in the Baptist Union of Great

Britain's 'May Meetings' in Westminster Chapel in 1946, and the Baptist World Alliance's meeting in the Albert Hall in London. During his long life many other honours came to him. He served as Dean of Theology both in the University College, Bangor, and in the University of Wales; and was President, in turn, of both the Caernarfon Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Wales and the North Wales Free Church Council. He served on numerous committees including the General Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society and the Central Religious Advisory Committee of the B.B.C. in Wales.

He wrote a number of essays for different denominational and secular publications (such as *Llafar*) and contributed articles to the *Welsh Biblical Dictionary*, *Geiriadur Beiblaidd*, published in 1926, and to the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (1959). He also edited *Cofiant Charles Davies* (1933). The Welsh Sunday schools benefited from two small volumes: *Hanes y Proffwydi* (1923) and *Hanesion Llyfr yr Actau* (1925). In 1949 he published an unusual Sunday school commentary for adults. In his Preface to his commentary on Ephesians and Philippians, *Esboniad ar yr Epistolau at yr Effesiaid a'r Philipiaid*, he argues that the epistles were intended to be read and understood at one sitting, not letters to be dissected and studied line by line, noting every word and phrase. New Testament letters need to be read through in order to understand what Paul is really saying. He, therefore, prepared a paraphrase of the letters and included within the paraphrase any expository comment that he felt was needed. At the end of each paraphrase he added a few notes on a small selection of striking words and phrases. In 1956, he wrote a brief biography of [Timothy Richard](#), the Welsh missionary to China who had been a school friend of his mother's, and in 1956 he wrote another tribute to a missionary - his only English volume - [Christy Davies : a Brief Memoir](#).

Between December 1974 and January 1977 *Seren Cymru* published his own memoirs as a weekly series; and in 1978, when he was already ninety years old, these were collected and published by the Gomerian Press, Llandysul, as *Troeon yr Yrfa*.

He died suddenly on 2 October 1979 while visiting his son, Edward, in Cornwall. He was cremated in Truro.

## Author

D. Hugh Matthews, (1936 - 2020)

## Sources

*The Baptist Union of Wales Handbook and Diary* (1980)

J. Williams Hughes, *Troeon yr Yrfa*

*Seren Cymru* 25 August 1972, 27 September 1974

A photograph of him appears on the dust cover of *Troeon yr Yrfa*

## Further Reading

Undeb Bedyddwyr Cymru: [Hughes – John Williams \(1888-1979\)](#)

## Additional Links

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