

## PARRY, ROBERT IFOR (1908-1975), minister (Cong.) and school teacher

**Name:** Robert Ifor Parry  
**Date of birth:** 1908  
**Date of death:** 1975  
**Spouse:** Mona Parry (née Morgan)  
**Parent:** Benjamin Parry  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** minister (Cong.) and school teacher  
**Area of activity:** Education; Religion  
**Author:** Ioan Wyn Gruffydd

Robert Ifor Parry was born at Holyhead, the son of Benjamin Parry and his wife, members at the Congregational Church at The Tabernacl, in the town, where the Rev. R. H. Davies was minister. His father was an engineer officer employed on the ships sailing between the port of Holyhead and Ireland. He went from the Holyhead County School as a very bright pupil in 1926 to the Bala-Bangor Theological College and the University College, Bangor, where one of his college contemporaries commented how they played with his initials - R.I.P.; 'He was', he said, 'somewhat of a Rip-van-Winkle, and it was wished that he would Rest in Peace!' He graduated with first-class Honours in History in 1929. He won the Robert Jones Scholarship which enabled him for two years to undertake research work taking as his theme, 'The attitude of Welsh Independents to working class movements, 1815-1870', a dissertation which won him his M.A. degree in 1931 and won for him the University of Wales The Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Prize. He would, so it was said, have easily graduated in divinity were it not for the fact that he accepted the call he received from the Independent Church at Siloa, Aberdare, where he was ordained in June 1933, as the successor of the Revs. David Price (1843-78) and D. Silyn Evans (1880-1930). In 1940, he married Mona, the only daughter of Richard Morgan, a deacon at Siloa.

The author of these words remembers staying in September 1959 at their home in Newlands, Aberdare, during a Collecting Journey towards the Bala-Bangor College – as was the custom in those days. The vicar of Aberdare, at that time, apparently had circulated all the town's inhabitants, including the ministers, urging them to attend his Church. The minister of Siloa was furious on account of this, and was consulting his books with reference to the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, maintaining that the vicar had no right in acting as he had done. The following day, the Synod of the Methodist Church was meeting at Aberdare and Ifor Parry was attending as a representative. When I returned in my car from the town, Mrs. Mona Parry was really taken aback on account of the fact that I had not noticed the war memorial in the centre of town. 'And you didn't see the Cenotaph?' she said in English. I never heard her speaking Welsh.

Soon after coming to Aberdare, Ifor Parry became recognised as an outstanding preacher and theologian. He followed the Welsh sermon pattern – an introduction and three headings - even though he did not possess the enthusiasm of the preachers of Anglesey, his home county. On more than one occasion, his modern outlook clashed with the town's fundamentalist establishment, particularly on the question of Bible teaching and in dealing with young people. His sermons had an intellectual rather than an emotional appeal. His services as a preacher were in great demand in Wales and outside her borders. He was frequently asked to preach in the counties of North Wales in the 1940s and 1950s. He was a guest preacher at the annual conference of the National Union of Teachers in Scarborough in 1967 and at the annual conference of Rotary International at Bournemouth in 1974. He addressed and preached on several occasions at the Annual Meetings of the Union of Welsh Independents – Bangor (1936), Maesteg (1947), Tonypany (1948), and Holyhead (1953). He was elected secretary of his Association of Churches in 1950, and five years later the secretary of the Welsh Independents' History Society. In 1959, his Association of Churches nominated him as deputy president of the Union of Welsh Independents, but that did not come about. The late [Rev. Trebor Lloyd Evans](#) testified that the Union thought more of him than he thought of the Union, 'and by the end of his life he was courteous and repentant enough to acknowledge that.'

His essay, *The theology of Karl Barth*, won him the Prose Medal at the Bridgend National Eisteddfod (1948), and the bibliography at the end of the essay reveals how thoroughly he did his work. The essay was published in 1949. His standard Welsh book, *Ymneilltuaeth*, was published in 1962 to mark the Tricenenary of 1662. The master's hand is obvious here as on the other articles he wrote to other publications – *Y Dysgedydd*, *Y Cofiadur* and *Y Traethodydd*. He was invited to address the Baptist Union of Wales in 1962 on the theme, *The Theological Basis of Nonconformity*. At Aberdare, between 1948 and 1965, he conducted classes on Christianity and Culture under the auspices of the Extra Mural Department of the University of Cardiff. He gave a series of 72 lectures from 1962 until 1965 on the History of Aberdare. He lectured on Local History Studies at the annual summer schools held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. For several years, under the nom-de-plume *Historicus*, he wrote a column for the *Aberdare Leader* containing a wealth of historical information. In spite of his varied activities, he found time for relaxation. He was a keen follower of cricket and rugby, and he was an excellent chess player.

Between 1960 and 1962, he taught on a temporary basis at the Aberdare Boys' Grammar School. In 1964, he relinquished his pastorate, having spent 31 years at Siloa, to become Head of Religious Studies at that school. He rejoiced in the opportunity given to him to train and influence young boys. His preaching ceased and his teaching increased.

Ifor Parry died on 18 December 1975, two months after the death of Mona, his wife (see *Y Tyst* 25 December 1975). He left a substantial sum of money to the Aberdare Boys' Grammar School to endow the 'Mona and Ifor Parry Trust Fund,' the income from which was to be used to promote the welfare of the boys from the school, and among the awards made possible was an annual prize for local history.

## Author

Ioan Wyn Gruffydd

## Sources

Personal research

*Y Tyst* 8 January 1976

*Blwyddiadur yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg* (Welsh Congregationalists Year Book), 1977

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [R. Ifor Parry](#)

## Additional Links

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