

HARRY, JOSEPH (1863 - 1950), schoolmaster and Independent minister

Name: Joseph Harry
Date of birth: 1863
Date of death: 1950
Gender: Male
Occupation: schoolmaster and Independent minister
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Evan David Jones

Born in Glandŵr near Swansea on 17 August 1863. After studying at Arnold College, a preparatory school, he entered the Presbyterian College at Carmarthen. Although he had been raised a Calvinistic Methodist, his love of liberty brought him to the Congregational church at Priory Street and it was as a member there that he was received into the college in 1881. He left the college in 1884 and spent some time at the Lancashire College in Manchester. By 1887 he had returned to Carmarthen as a teacher under J.C. Thomas at Parcelfed school. In 1888, he was ordained as the minister of the English congregational church, Mount Pleasant, Hirwaun. He resigned his ministry in 1892 when he won a science scholarship to the University College, Cardiff. He probably went with J.C. Thomas to Weston in 1894, but by 1895 he had returned again to Carmarthen where, with W. Roberts and T. Wedros Jones, he sought to keep the Old College School open. He was the headmaster of the school from 1885 to 1913 and he encouraged generations of young boys into the ministry and into the professions. He accepted the pastorate of Salem congregational church, Llandovery, in 1913 and he remained there until his retirement, on medical grounds, in 1922. Every spring, he lost his voice. After retiring, he lived with his daughter and her husband, Dan Davies, in Mansfield Road, Ilford. He was held in high esteem in Llandovery, as he had been in Carmarthen. On his departure from Llandovery, he was presented with a set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He took a leading part in the public life of the town of Carmarthen and he served as a member of the council and as a J.P. After he moved to London, he ministered at the congregational church in Thames Ditton from 1925 until his health forced him to give up this charge in 1930.

His chief interest, after he retired to England, was literary composition. He participated in *eisteddfod* competitions from early in the century and he took part in the debates held in the pages of *Y Tyst* on Welsh orthography. He won chairs and crowns at the Meirionydd, London, Powys and Birkenhead *eisteddfodau*. He was a frequent competitor for the crown and for the chair at the national *eisteddfod*. Some of his publications are the products of competition, e.g. *Orgraff y Gymraeg: llawlyfr i blant ysgol* (1925); *Anfarwoldeb* (1925), the poem which won the Crown at the Powys *eisteddfod* of 1925; *Priod-ddulliau'r Gymraeg* (1927), which won a prize at the Swansea *eisteddfod* of 1926; and, *Elfennau beirniadaeth lenorol* (second to the essay by D.J. Davies, Treorchy, at the Treorchy *eisteddfod* in 1928, but it was Harry's essay that Foyles chose to publish in 1929). He won a prize at the Pontypool *eisteddfod* for translating 3 lyrics from German into Welsh, and *Cynan* praised his lyrics at the Dolgellau *eisteddfod* of 1949. He was a thoughtful preacher but he shone as a teacher and guide of the young. He had an attractive personality which combined, in a natural manner, scholarship, patience and a sense of humour.

Between 1940 and 1949, Harry lived at Llandrindod but by 1950 he was back in London. He died on his holidays at Westcliffe-on-Sea, 23 June 1950, and he was buried in Surbiton.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Blwyddiadur yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg, 1951

The Congregational Year Book, 1951

D. Edgar Jones, *Ysgrifau a cherddi* (typescript through the courtesy of the late Rev. Kenneth E. Jones; copy in NLW)

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Published date: 2001

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Jones, E. D., (2001). HARRY, JOSEPH (1863 - 1950), schoolmaster and Independent minister. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 9 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s2-HARR-JOS-1863>

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