

JONES, WATCYN SAMUEL (1877 - 1964), agricultural administrator and principal of a theological college

Name: Watcyn Samuel Jones
Date of birth: 1877
Date of death: 1964
Spouse: Ada Jones (née Sproxton)
Parent: Mari Jones
Parent: Rees Cribin Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: agricultural administrator and principal of a theological college
Area of activity: Education; Nature and Agriculture; Religion
Author: David Elwyn James Davies

Born 16 February 1877, son of **Rees Cribin Jones**, Unitarian minister, and Mari Jones (the daughter of Watcyn and Mari Jones, Ty'n-lofft, Betws Bledrws), in a house in Bridge Street, Lampeter known as Glasfryn Stores. He was one of four children, but the other three died in infancy. His father, like many other Unitarian ministers of the time, ran a school, and perhaps the son received some of his early education at home in Ogmore House, a house that the family built in the same year as the son's birth. He was educated thereafter at Lampeter school (1890-92), Rev. David Evans's school at Cribyn (1892-94), and for a short time at Llanybydder grammar school, before he was accepted into the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen at the end of 1894. He displayed early scientific tendencies and it is said that he was the last student to sit examinations there in science, since the education syllabus of the old academy was confined to theology shortly after 1895. Before the end of that year, he decided to withdraw from the ministerial course (because he was not a fluent speaker, he said) to study for an arts degree at Aberystwyth (1895-1900). His course was interrupted because of his mother's illness; he moved to University College, Bangor in 1900 and gained a B.A. there in 1902, one of **John Morris-Jones**'s first honours class. He gained a B.Sc. at the same college, pursuing additionally the new courses in agriculture and forestry and returned to Aberystwyth for another course in agriculture (N.D.D.). He was invited, with a scholarship, to be an assistant tutor at the School of Rural Economy at St. John's College, Oxford. He was recognised as an authority on the anatomy of trees, and he published a standard textbook, *Timbers, their structure and identification* (1924). He contributed on a similar subject to *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* 1927. He married Ada Sproxton in 1910.

In order to be close to his aged father, he returned to Wales in 1913, joining the civil service and becoming the chief inspector of the Welsh office of the Board of Agriculture with its head office at Aberystwyth. In this post he pioneered and developed agricultural education for a quarter of a century (1913-38) and under his supervision the four agricultural institutions in Wales were launched. In 1918 he received an M.A. degree from his college in Oxford and in the same year he was awarded an M.Sc. (Wales).

He retired from the Ministry of Agriculture in 1937, aged 60 years. In 1938 he accepted, with some hesitation, an invitation to succeed **Rev. J. Park(e) Davies** as the Principal of the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. Although he had no theological qualification to teach there but having facility in Welsh and experience as a public speaker, he was, for a period of eight years, one of the most successful principals in the history of the college (1937-45). His students testified to his just discipline, his impartial thoroughness and gentlemanly and unassuming manner. He had great dreams for the future of the college at Carmarthen, but circumstances prevented him from realising them: he tried to combine the ample resources of the Unitarian colleges in England (Oxford and Manchester) with those at Carmarthen. He prepared plans and collected more than £3500 to extend the college, including a residential hall and a chapel. He hoped to see the development of the institution into a religious cultural centre for the ministers and laymen of Wales. He translated many of the Psalms, but they were not published. He was a Unitarian with 'a strong tendency towards humanism'; he was faithful at the Unitarian churches at Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.

As can be seen from his only Welsh book, *Helyntion hen bregethwr a'i gyfoedion* (1940), based on the story of his father, he was an able photographer and writer. He contributed regularly to Welsh periodicals, e.g. ' Rhyddid ' namely his presidential address to the Unitarian Society, in *Yr Ymfynydd*, July 1924; ' Dosbarth Cymraeg (Syr) John Morris Jones ', in *Y Geninen*, 1917; ' Pren, ei nodweddion, etc ', in *Y Genhinen*, 1954. ' W.S. ' and his wife retired to Landre, Aberystwyth. He died on 17 October 1964 and his ashes were scattered on the family grave at Brondeifi graveyard, Lampeter. His wife died on 28 July 1965.

Author

Dr David Elwyn James Davies, (1926 - 1997)

Sources

Yr Ymfynydd, November and December 1964

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