

PIERCE, THOMAS JONES (1905 - 1964), historian

Name: Thomas Jones Pierce
Date of birth: 1905
Date of death: 1964
Spouse: Margaret Pierce (née Williams)
Parent: Winifred Pierce
Parent: John Pierce
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian
Area of activity: History and Culture; Law
Author: Brynley Francis Roberts

Born 18 March 1905 at Liverpool to John and Winifred Pierce. He was educated at the Liverpool Collegiate School and Liverpool University where he graduated with first-class honours in the School of Medieval and Modern History in 1927. He was awarded the Chadwick Scholarship (1927), the Gladstone Memorial Prize (1928) and the degree of M.A. (1929). Following a brief period as a University Fellow he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the department of History, University College of North Wales, Bangor, with additional duties in the dept. of extra-mural studies in 1930. In 1945 he was invited to take up the post of Special Lecturer in Medieval Welsh History at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, an appointment made jointly by the college and the National Library of Wales. He was promoted Research Professor in 1948 and elected F.S.A. in 1950. He was a researcher at the National Library (*Clenennau letters and papers* was published in 1947), a very effective lecturer at the college and in extra-mural classes and local societies, and he was active in other fields as editor of *Caernarvonshire Hist. Soc. Trans.* (1939-63), chairman of the society's Council (1962-64), secretary of the Cambrian Archaeological Association (1946-55), chairman of its general committee (1956-64), and its president (1964). He was High Sheriff of Cardiganshire 1960-61, and he was a keen Rotarian.

He married Margaret (Megan) Williams in 1944 and they had one daughter and one son. They made their home at Brynhyfryd, Tal-y-bont, Cardiganshire. He died in Aberystwyth 9 October 1964 and was cremated at Anfield Crematorium, Liverpool.

T. Jones Pierce had been a pupil of [William Garmon Jones](#) at Liverpool but he was greatly influenced by [John Edward Lloyd](#) whose colleague he was at Bangor. In turn he himself inspired generations of young Welsh historians and was acknowledged to be one of the most creative Welsh historians of his day. He was a pioneer in the study of the problems associated with the decay of tribalism and the development of the landed estates. He published a number of studies of the social structure of Welsh rural communities in the middle ages and the changes in forms of land tenure. He was one of the first to analyse in detail the evidence of the Welsh Laws for the operation of galanas and tir gwely, and his demonstration of the dynamic, developmental elements in the medieval law-books and the exercise of the law in the courts shed much light on the complexities of medieval land tenure. His studies of 13th-century Gwynedd are essential for our understanding of the economic, political and constitutional development of that province. He did not succeed in completing a book on these themes but his major articles have been collected (together with a bibliography of his writings) by J. Beverley Smith, *Medieval Welsh society* (1974).

Author

Dr Brynley Francis Roberts

Sources

- J. B Smith, op. cit.
Glanville Jones, *Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions*, 26 (1965), 9-19
E. D. Jones, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 113 (1964); 170-2
J. Gwynn Williams, *Welsh History Review*, 1965, 271-3

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