

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE editor's first duty is to pay tribute to the memory of this book's original editor, Sir John Edward Lloyd, and of the later associate-editor, Sir William Llewelyn Davies. Sir John's great reputation was in itself a most considerable asset to the promoters of the dictionary, ensuring as it did the confidence of prospective readers and of individuals and public bodies whose assistance in its publication was being sought. But Sir John was very far indeed from being solely or even chiefly a figure-head; until his health began to fail, he took a most active part in the preparatory work, and laid down most of the principles of selection and of treatment; further, he himself wrote sixty-two of the articles which appear in the earlier part of the dictionary. His assistant and eventual successor has the happiest memories of the conferences which placed at his disposal Sir John's ripe scholarship, long experience, and highly practical sense, with a generosity which had indeed already marked long years of friendship and kindness.

Sir William Davies, a much younger man, had been brought into the work after Sir John's death not only on his own considerable merits, but also as a 'reserve' should his senior colleague fall by the way. Sad to say, however, Sir William fell a victim to a long and painful illness, and he died before the Welsh edition of the dictionary appeared. He had brought to the work a devotion and a conscientiousness beyond praise, and (as Sir John Cecil-Williams has explained in his preface) had been left for many weeks in practically sole charge—he supervised the printing of the articles from A to K. Even later, when in dire pain, he insisted on reading proofs, despite the remonstrances of his colleague; and he contributed nearly two hundred articles, many of them long and detailed. His surviving colleague gratefully records the complete harmony which at all times marked his years of association with Sir William Davies. Other consequences of the partnership call for mention—with the cordial assent of the Council of the National Library of Wales, the great resources of that Library were now placed at our disposal: its apparatus of reference, its masses of unpublished information, the diverse specialized knowledge of the members of its staff. The Library is the clearing-house of historical research in Wales, and its officials are well placed to know who has done (or is doing) work on a particular figure in our history—the selection of writers could thus in many instances be left with perfect confidence to the Librarian. Further, a problem which had already

begun to disquiet those at the Bangor end of the undertaking was now solved—that of correspondence, duplicating, filing, and storage. This side of the work was thenceforth placed under the competent supervision of Sir William's personal secretary, Miss Margaret Beatrice Davies. As the work grew, so did Miss Davies's share in it; from purely clerical functions she has progressed to proof-reading and the checking of references, so much so that the Dictionary Committee has had the pleasure of officially recognizing her, first as dictionary secretary, then as sub-editor, and finally (as far as the present English edition is concerned) as assistant-editor.

The expression 'Welsh Biography' in the title calls for definition. The very great majority of the persons recorded in the book were indeed Welsh by birth and residence. But not a few distinguished Welshmen included have in fact played little part in the particular life of Wales, and owe their reputation (and in a good many instances their inclusion in the great *Dictionary of National Biography*) to their careers in other parts of the realm or even overseas. On this matter, Sir John Lloyd laid down two canons, first, of selection, and second, of treatment—canons which his successors, hard-pressed for space, have very gladly observed. Under the former, he insisted that such a person, or at least one of his parents, should have been born within Wales—he would have nothing to do with 'of Welsh descent.' Under the second, he instructed contributors to 'elucidate very carefully the Welsh antecedents' of these men, but to 'deal very summarily with their careers, referring the readers for fuller information to the *D.N.B.* or some other work of reference.' The first ruling will explain why, for example, the very famous Thomas Jefferson, who signed the Declaration of American Independence, and who on his own statement was descended from 'an ancestor . . . from near the mountain of Snowdon,' finds no place in this book, while his much less famous co-signatory Francis Lewis, born in Wales, is included; the second will explain the difference between, for example, the excellent *D.N.B.* article on Maurice Morgann, which merely glances at his descent 'from an ancient Welsh family,' and the article on him in the present book, which is very brief on his work, and devotes much more space to fitting him into his Welsh background. It should be added that in a few instances where there was reasonable certainty, though not absolute proof, that a Welshman of this kind (or one of his parents) was indeed born in Wales, the editor has included him—and further, that when an expatriated Welshman who was included had noteworthy descendants, these have been very briefly noted at the end of the article on their ancestor; see (e.g.) the articles on John Davies (1795–1861) and Joshua Parry.

On the other hand, there are in this book notices of quite a number of people who were Welsh neither by blood nor by birthplace. Sir John Lloyd intended the dictionary to be a biographical reference-book for students of the history of Wales, and in all periods of that history there have been non-Welshmen who have lived and worked in Wales and have greatly affected its history—great landlords, pioneers in industry, even men whose contact with Wales was but episodic, such as Thomas Telford or bishop Thomas Burgess; these men could not possibly have been excluded.

No selection of names for inclusion, particularly in a one-volume dictionary, could have satisfied all our readers. But Sir John Lloyd and his successors have aimed at giving the reader a representative selection, illustrating the whole history of the Welsh people of all social classes, at all periods and in all walks of life. While giving their due place to major figures in politics and administration, in the law, in industry, in thought or scholarship or literature or the arts, we have not forgotten men and women whose 'fame,' while not purely parochial, was yet relatively circumscribed—not a few of them, indeed, owing their place in popular memory (however dim that memory may have become by today) to their oddities: quaint old preachers of a vanished age, strolling ballad-singers whose like we shall never hear again, witch-doctors and rustic (but quite far-famed) bone-setters of pre-professional days, founders of odd 'fancy religions.' The question of intrinsic merit does not arise; a portrait of a society must not leave out the warts, and we have been encouraged by the example of the *D.N.B.*, one of whose articles opens briskly with 'Wilks, John (d. 1846), swindler,' to include a selection of impostors and other predatory characters.

The editors, in selecting names for inclusion, have received much help from all quarters. Naturally, they have also sought expert guidance in matters which lay outside their own ambit of knowledge. Thus, the register of lesser-known poets of the mediaeval and early modern periods was drawn up by members of the staff of the National Library of Wales—who also wrote the notices, often a mere half-a-dozen lines giving a *floruit*, a provenance, and a list of manuscripts, but none the less involving considerable trouble. The entries on musicians were sublet, as it were, to the late Mr. R. D. Griffith of Old Colwyn, who was the foremost authority on the history of Welsh choral and congregational music, and who, while suggesting suitable writers upon the greater musicians, himself furnished the numerous notices on the minor figures. Mr. A. Rocyn Jones of Harley Street selected (and for the most part wrote upon) the medical men. Dr. T. Iorwerth Jones, of the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington, invited to select

(and write upon) the scientists, pleaded lack of leisure to write, but generously allowed us full use of his researches published in the *Cymmrodorion Transactions* of 1932-3; most of such notices of scientific notabilities as were compiled by the editor are based entirely on Dr. Jones's notes. So much for our 'departmental' benefactors. But the present editor wishes to make it clear that the final choice of entries has throughout been retained in his hands, and that he accepts full responsibility for misjudgements, whether in inclusion or in omission.

The allocation of space, again, was the editor's responsibility. Some articles were bound to be lengthy—the articles on the great landed families, on the industrial dynasties of the 19th century, and on the major individual figures. Others, such as the notes (already mentioned) on early poets, could not but be very brief. In between these extremes there is much variation, which at first sight may seem to some readers (as it has to some reviewers of the Welsh edition) puzzling. But Sir John Lloyd wished the book to be useful not only to the general reader, but also to more advanced students of the history of Wales, and his successor, without claiming that Sir John would always have concurred with him, has borne this well in mind, and has preferred the student's convenience before logical consistency. To illustrate: one of the chief features of historical research in Wales in the last thirty years or so has been the elucidation of the Tudor and Stuart periods, hitherto less adequately explored than the periods on either side of them. And it has seemed to the editor that in view of the difficulties in book publishing nowadays, the present dictionary was likely to be for some time the only printed book in which the new knowledge would be readily accessible in convenient form; accordingly contributors of articles relating to these two periods have been encouraged to write at relatively greater length. Then, when we come to religious developments in Wales during the last three hundred years, we find that the larger religious bodies are, broadly speaking, well represented on our bookshelves; but the history of the smaller connexions is but meagrely available—for the most part in scattered articles in periodicals which are themselves often not easily accessible, and frequently enough only in manuscript sources. For that matter, when one has to deal with the larger churches themselves, information about the *personnel* involved in crises and controversies long stilled, and therefore largely forgotten, is often very difficult to come by—people like the 18th century Arminians in Wales, the 'splinter' Methodist groups around 1750, the dissident Baptists around 1800, the pioneers of the Tractarian Movement in Wales. Again, there are the men who kept 'one-man' grammar-schools of note, in days of scant educational provision. It is precisely such people as these that provoke a student's curiosity (to put

it at its lowest level) when he stumbles upon their names in the course of his studies of greater men and greater movements.

The present English edition of this dictionary is for the most part a reproduction of the 1953 Welsh edition. Many of our contributors had furnished English versions of their articles in advance; the rest of the articles have been translated for this edition, and the editor would like to proffer his special thanks to Mr. Leonard Owen (Honorary Treasurer of the Cymmrodorion Society), who voluntarily undertook much of the work of translation. But there are differences between the two editions. In the first place, the present book includes a whole host of corrections, mostly of date and place. Writers of articles had not infrequently been completely baffled in their attempts to reach certainty on these points—or again had quite naturally relied on the older printed biographies or upon memorial inscriptions. The publication of the Welsh edition has drawn the attention of many well-wishers to defects of this kind, and we have in particular to thank local antiquaries, well versed in their parish registers, for sending in precise dates of christening or of burial. Information has come in from most unexpected quarters. A letter from South Africa provided full information about its writer's ancestor, out of family documents; an inquirer who was not particularly interested in an Anglo-Welsh poet had stumbled upon the date of his christening—hitherto unknown—while searching the registers of a parish (not that of the poet's parents) for quite a different purpose; the editor himself had assumed that a well-known man, of an aristocratic family, had been born in the home of that family (the year was known)—but a local antiquary was able to give his birthplace and the date of his christening, in another and not even a contiguous parish. Even after 1836, the state registration has still not availed us when the person concerned has died in a locality to which we have, so far, no clue.

In the second place, research will not 'stay put.' Masses of family papers keep on coming into our greater libraries, and in their light it has been found necessary to revise some of the 'family' articles, and in a few instances to rewrite them wholesale, at greater length. And thirdly, the editor has endeavoured to rectify some of his sins of omission, by arranging for the inclusion, in an appendix, of more than a hundred additional articles. To make room for these, he has omitted a few of the original entries which seemed to him on reconsideration to be relatively dispensable, and has further coaxed a little more paper out of his Committee. It should be added that for our Welsh readers these corrections and additions will be printed in the forthcoming Welsh Supplement (1941-50), which is now nearing completion.

The dictionary contains some 3,500 articles, including 180 articles on families; the individual entries frequently include substantial notices of the parents or children (or other close relations) of the person concerned, and the 'family' articles have naturally something to say (i.e. something more than mere names and dates) about at least three, and sometimes ten or more, of the members of a family. Altogether, nearly 5,000 persons have been recorded. The Welsh edition had an index, compiled by Mr. B. G. Owens (now Keeper of Manuscripts in the National Library) of the persons mentioned in articles on their families or relations; most of the names in that index have in this edition been inserted, as cross-references, in the main alphabet—as also have the literary pseudonyms which in the Welsh edition had been listed in a separate index compiled by Miss Davies. Mr. Owens also drew up the list of abbreviations of book-titles. The arrangement of our list of the initials denoting contributors has not commended itself to some of our Welsh reviewers. The editor had in this matter followed the example of the *D.N.B.*, and after further consideration the Committee decided to retain the arrangement.

The notes which follow this introduction attempt to provide the non-Welsh reader with a little information on technical matters which may be unfamiliar to him. It now only remains for the editor to express his very warm thanks: to the Council of the Honorary Society of Cymmrodorion, its Dictionary Committee, and its officers, for their constant support and encouragement—and for their endless patience; to his assistant-editor Miss Davies; to the three hundred and more who have contributed articles to the book, whether veteran scholars or young workers who make their first appearance in print in its pages; to the officials of the National Library of Wales and of the Library of the University College at Bangor; and last, but far from least, to Mr. Ben Jones, of the firm of William Lewis, Printers, who has taken very great personal interest and pride in this work, despite the many troubles which its editor has caused him.

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