

GRIFFITH, JOHN (Y Gohebydd; 1821 - 1877), newspaper correspondent, campaigner for education, and principal mover in re-establishing the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion

Name: John Griffith

Pseudonym: Y Gohebydd

Date of birth: 1821

Date of death: 1877

Parent: Maria Griffith (née Roberts)

Parent: Griffith Griffith

Gender: Male

Occupation: newspaper correspondent, campaigner for education, and principal mover in re-establishing the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion

Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing; Philanthropy; Printing and Publishing

Author: Frank Price Jones

Born 16 December 1821 at Bodgwilym near Barmouth, son of Griffith and Maria Griffith - his mother being the eldest daughter of **John Roberts** (1767 - 1834) of Llanbrynmair. After having had an elementary education at Barmouth he was, about 1836, apprenticed to William Owen, 'Grocer, Draper, and Druggist' at Barmouth, with whom he remained until 1840. After that he was a shop assistant in Scotland Road, Liverpool, and at Llangynog, Montgomeryshire.

In 1847 he was appointed assistant to **Sir Hugh Owen** in connection with his work as secretary of the Welsh Education Society and went to live in London. This work ended in 1849 and he then kept a grocer's shop first at Greenwich and then at Walworth.

While working for **Hugh Owen** he made his acquaintance with London and with many of the city's prominent Liberals, for part of his work involved calling on the latter to get financial support for establishing British Schools in Wales. He made use of the knowledge thus gained when he came to write articles for the *Cronicl* published by his uncle, **Samuel Roberts** ('S.R.'). The articles were signed 'Wmffra Edward.' His first letter to **Thomas Gee's** *Baner Cymru* appeared in the third issue of that paper, 25 March 1857, and at the suggestion of **Gwilym Hiraethog** he was appointed London correspondent to the *Baner*. It was his work in this connection which earned him his pseudonym, Y Gohebydd, (The Correspondent) and gave him his place in Welsh history. He was the principal 'special correspondent' of his day in Wales and his letters to the *Baner* did a great deal to enlarge the horizon of his monoglot Welsh readers. He supported most of the liberal movements from the middle of the century on, not only in his letters but in conferences and public meetings. Among his other activities he strove for elementary and higher education in Wales; he was a member of the committee formed to consider the question of founding the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth and was afterwards a member of the college council. He worked for the Liberal candidates in the 1868 election, and later was the driving force in the society set up to defend and support the Cardiganshire tenants who were turned out of their farms after the election. He also supported the efforts of **Henry Richard** to secure the secret ballot. He was a zealous champion of the eisteddfod and was the principal mover in re-establishing the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion in 1873.

He sent very vivid reports of his various missions to the *Baner*; from the U.S.A. in 1865-6 (in which he referred particularly to the emancipation of the slaves), from France in 1867 (the Paris exhibition), and from Austria where he visited the Vienna exhibition (1873). In 1875 he went to Switzerland at the expense of Samuel Morley to try to recover his health which had, all along, been very indifferent. In 1875, too, he was presented with a testimonial amounting to £734 17s. 0d. which had been collected for him. He was an Independent and had been a staunch supporter of the movement to establish the Union of Welsh Independents. He died 13 December 1877 at his sister's house at Liverpool and was buried at Llangollen.

Author

Frank Price Jones, (1920 - 1975)

Sources

T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen... from the earliest times to the present* (1908)

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies* (1894), 72-4

Baner ac Amserau Cymru, 19 and 26 December 1877

Y Geninen, 1890, 186-9

Y Cronicl, 1878, 60-2 (an appreciation by his uncle 'J.R.')

'Y Gohebydd' [John Griffith] cofiant a dyfyniadau o'i lythyr fel gohebydd Llundain "Baner ac amserau Cymru" (Denbigh 1905)

Further reading

NLW Archives: NLW MS 24173B: American autograph album of John Griffith (Gohebydd), 1866-1868

Additional Links

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