

JONES, GWENAN (1889-1971), educationalist and author

Name: Gwenan Jones
Date of birth: 1889
Date of death: 1971
Parent: Ann Catherine Jones
Gender: Female
Occupation: educationalist and author
Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing
Author: Nerys Ann Jones

Gwenan Jones was born on 3 November 1889 on Gelli Isaf farm, Waun y Bala. She was baptised by the [Rev. Michael D. Jones](#), and the name given to her was Gwen Ann, a combination of the names of her mother, Ann Catherine, and her grandmother, Gwen Jones. (It was at university that she started to use the name Gwenan.) Her grandmother, a poor but able and gifted widow, was the central figure in her young life. She was educated at Maes y Waun Primary School and at Bala Girls' Grammar School (where the headteacher, Elizabeth J. Owens, was a great influence), and in the Welsh Department of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, under the headship of [Professor Edward Anwyl](#). She graduated B.A. in 1909 and then undertook a teacher training course.

She taught Welsh and English at Pontypool Girls' School, 1910-1914, completing an M.A. dissertation in her spare time, a comparison of two texts of Brut y Brenhinedd. During this time she was invited by [Ifor Williams](#) to join the Macwyaid and her contributions were published in *Y Brython* under the pseudonym Macwyes y Llyn. She was awarded a scholarship to study the relationship between drama in medieval Wales and Cornwall and in England under the supervision of Dr Carleton Brown at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania. She completed her research at Minnesota University and in 1917 was awarded a PhD for a thesis which was eventually published in 1939 as *A Study of Three Medieval Welsh Religious Plays*. She spent two years as an English teacher at a girls' college in Columbia Missouri before returning to Wales in 1920. She was offered a post as a lecturer at the Education Department in Aberystwyth and was a member of the university staff for 30 years. She was a great influence, supporting and inspiring generations of students, writing and giving public lectures on educational matters.

She served many political, cultural, religious and social movements in Wales as a member and organiser of committees and conferences. In 1942 she was appointed the first president of Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru and was honorary president for many years after that, playing an important role in the publication of *Ysgolion y Cymry* (1942) and *Polisi Addysg i Gymru* (1945). An active member of Undeb Cymru Fydd and its predecessor, Cyngor Diogelu Diwylliant Cymru, she served as chair of the Women's Committee and editor of *Llythyr Ceridwen*, 1957-1968. She contributed substantially to the success of Urdd Gobaith Cymru for over thirty years, acting as chair of the Women's Division, chair of the Council and vice-President. She was involved in the development of the National Eisteddfod and was Warden of the University of Wales Guild of Graduates, 1957-59. She was also diligent in her support of Plaid Cymru and stood as a candidate for the University seat in the General Election of 1945.

She joined the Christian peace movement Urdd y Deyrnas soon after it was launched in 1922 and led the movement for over thirty years, chairing committees, organising conferences and camps, giving talks, leading discussion groups and worship. She edited its quarterly journal, *Yr Efrdydd*, 1935-55, contributing many articles and reviews, in addition to poems and essays under the pseudonym Ann Rolant. She also published *Yr Allor* (a collection of prayers) and *Yr Ysgol Sul a'r Plant*.

As a young member of the Student Christian Movement she was influenced by the idea of the Social Gospel and throughout her life she strove to express her faith in practical ways. As a young teacher before the First World War she did humanitarian work among the children and young people of Pontypool. Years later she gave a home to a young mother and her son who had fled Latvia after the Second World War, providing both with an education.

Gwenan Jones died on 12 January 1971 in Bron-glais Hospital, Aberystwyth, and was buried in the cemetery at Talybont near Bala. A memorial service was held at Seilo Chapel, Aberystwyth.

Author

Dr Nerys Ann Jones

Sources

Tributes in *Yr Athro*, *The Cambrian News* and *Merionethshire Standard*, *Y Faner*

The Dr Gwenan Jones Collection, Manuscripts Department, National Library of Wales

Correspondence and conversations with colleagues and friends

Further Reading

Delweddau

H. H. Davies & Son, Dr. Gwenan Jones

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