

JONES, RICHARD LEWIS ('DIC') (1934-2009), poet and farmer

Name: Richard Lewis Jones
Date of birth: 1934
Date of death: 2009
Spouse: Sylvia Jean Jones (née Jones)
Child: Esiyllt Mair Jones
Child: Rhian Medi Jones
Child: Delyth Wyn Jones
Child: Tristan Lewis Jones
Child: Brychan Llyr Jones
Child: Dafydd Dyfed Jones
Parent: Frances Louisa Jones (née Isaac)
Parent: Alban Lewis Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet and farmer
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Nature and Agriculture; Poetry
Author: Idris Reynolds

Richard Jones, or Dic as he was known throughout Wales, was born on Good Friday, 30 March 1934 at Pen-y-graig, a smallholding near Tre'r-ddôl in North Cardiganshire. His mother, Frances Louisa (1910-1986) was one of the daughters of the Isaac family who farmed there. She qualified as a teacher and after taking up a post at Blaen-porth school she married a local farmer, Alban Lewis (Abba) Jones (1911-1957) and settled in the area. It was there at Tan-yr-eglwys, the family farm in the south of the county, that Dic Jones was brought up. He had an elder brother, David Goronwy (1932-2002) and later three girls arrived to complete the family, Rhiannon Maud Sanders (1935-), Margaret Elizabeth Daniel (1941-) and Eleanor Mary Isaac Jones (1942-).

Dic received his formal education at Blaen-porth primary school and at the secondary school in Cardigan and left school at the age of fifteen. Although he discovered later that he had performed well in his final examinations, he had no desire to prolong his academic studies. Farming was in his blood and he spent the rest of his life, at Tan-yr-eglwys and Hendre near-by, earning his living from the land which had belonged to his family for generations. The pleasure he derived from following in the footsteps of his forefathers is reflected in his two main Eisteddfodic odes, 'Cynhaeaf' ('Harvest') and 'Gwanwyn' ('Spring').

When Dic was in his early teens the Reverend and Mrs Tegryn Davies moved to the area to minister the Welsh Independent chapels at Aber-porth and Beulah. They immediately set up a branch of Urdd Gobaith Cymru which proved very appealing to the local youngsters. During this period Aelwyd Aber-porth were regular winners at the Urdd National Eisteddfod and, consequently, a whole generation of children received a firm grounding in the language and culture of Wales. It was at the Aelwyd that Dic first became aware of the Welsh alliterative poetic technique known as cynganedd. The musical resonance of the words of Gwilym Tilsley's ode, 'Y Glöwr' had so enthralled him that he set about learning more about this ancient word-craft. Before long he was being taught by Alun Cilie, a local poet and a master in the art of cynganedd. He mastered this complex form and won the Chair at the Urdd National Eisteddfod on five separate occasions. These successes opened doors for him and he became accepted as a fully-fledged member of the traditional bardic community that existed in South Cardiganshire at that time.

The Urdd also had its social benefits. It was there that Dic met Sylvia Jean (Sian) Jones (1938-) from near-by Parc-llyn. Over time their friendship blossomed into a life-long marriage which was blessed with six children, Delyth Wyn (1960-), Rhian Medi (1961-), Dafydd Dyfed (1963-), Brychan Llyr (1970-) and the twins, Trystan Lewis (1980-) and Esiyllt Mair (1980-1981). Esiyllt was born with Downes Syndrome and died within a few months. The poem which Dic composed in her memory is regarded as one of the most powerful elegies in the Welsh language. Two of the children, the actress and singer Delyth Wyn and the television personality and musician Brychan Llyr have become familiar voices and faces on the Welsh media.

Following his Urdd accomplishments Dic set his sights on winning the Chair at the National Eisteddfod of Wales and succeeded in Aberafan in 1966. His poem, 'Cynhaeaf', was widely acclaimed. One of the adjudicators, **Dr Thomas Parry**, could only humbly thank the poet for producing such a masterpiece and plead for more of the same. The sequel appeared ten years later at the National Eisteddfod of Wales which was held in Cardigan. Although Dic's ode was favoured by the adjudicators, it was disqualified from the competition because its author had attended a meeting of the Literary Committee of that Eisteddfod. Nevertheless, Dic's awdl, 'Gwanwyn', together with 'Cynhaeaf', are regarded as two of the greatest poems that the competition has ever produced.

His first volume of poetry, *Agor Grwn*, was published in 1960, and was followed by six other collections. Following Dic's death Ceri Wyn Jones edited a definitive collection of the poet's works, entitled *Cerddi Dic yr Hendre*, whilst Elsie Reynolds edited *Yr un hwyl a'r un wyl*, a collection of his unpublished poems, mainly of a social nature.

As a poet Dic Jones preferred the traditional metres. He won the hearts and minds of a large audience, many of whom can still recite large sections of his work from memory. He disliked obscurity in verse and always insisted that poetry should not be a puzzle. As a highly accomplished exponent of cynganedd he always put a great emphasis on the word-craft itself. The englynion he composed to his eldest daughter, Delyth Wyn, on her eighteenth birthday are so intricate they would have won the admiration of the court poets, the master-craftsmen of the Middle Ages. In the space of twenty four lines he manages to introduce the word 'deunaw' (eighteen) into the word pattern of the cynganedd in nineteen different ways. He found his subject matter within his rural surroundings and, when he extended his sights towards the horizons, he did so with the wisdom of a countryman whose feet were firmly rooted in the land to which he belonged.

Yet he was more than just a poet. His autobiography, *Os hoffech wybod ...*, first published in 1989, demonstrates his talent as a prose writer. He also contributed a weekly column to the Welsh language journal *Golwg* for over a decade. Having been born into a musical family, he enjoyed singing and was a member of the choir established by

his father, Côr Meibion Blaen-porth, from its inception in 1946 until his death. He was, as second tenor, also part of the national successes of Côr Pensynwyr Aberteifi under the baton of his sister, Margaret Daniel.

He became a popular figure on the Welsh media, and was a member of long-running series like *'Penigamp'* and *'Talwrn y Beirdd'*. There was a constant demand for his services throughout Wales as an eisteddfod adjudicator and tutor. He was blessed with a good memory and as a lecturer or public speaker he would pride himself on always addressing his audience without any notes.

Over the years the rugged farmer who won the Chair at Aberafan became a national icon. He received an honorary MA from the University of Wales for his services to Welsh literature. In 2008 he was elected Archdruid, the first farmer to hold the office, and he presided over the Gorsedd ceremonies in the National Eisteddfod that was held that year in Cardiff. By the following year he was in poor health and was unable to attend the Eisteddfod at Bala. He died on 18 August 2009 of pancreatic cancer and was buried in the cemetery of Blaenannerch Chapel. One of his most famous couplets has been carved on the gravestone:

Mae alaw pan ddistawo
Yn mynnu canu'n y co'.

Author

Idris Reynolds

Sources

Dic Jones, *Os hoffech wybod â€¦ a Chofio Dic* (2010)

personal information

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Dic Jones](#)

Delweddau

Geoff Charles, *Urdd National Eisteddfod, Abertridwr 1955*

Sound and Film

NSSAW: [Eisteddfod 1976](#)

YouTube: [Dic Jones - Y Gwanwyn](#)

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