

LEWIS, JOHN HUW (1931-2008), printer and publisher

Name: John Huw Lewis
Date of birth: 1931
Date of death: 2008
Parent: Myra Lewis (née Evans)
Parent: Rhys Lewis
Gender: Male
Occupation: printer and publisher
Area of activity: Printing and Publishing
Author: Gwerfyl Pierce Jones

Huw Lewis was born on 13 January 1931 at Brondeifi, Llandysul, Ceredigion, the eldest of the four children of Rhys Lewis and Myra Lewis (née Evans). He was educated at Llandysul Primary School, Llandysul Grammar School and at Llandoverly College, where he was awarded a scholarship to the London College of Printing.

He served his two years of National Service in the Army, mainly in Egypt, spending much of his time working on maps. Having completed his apprenticeship in the printing industry in London he returned to Llandysul to join the family business, Gwasg Gomer, also known as Gomer Press. The press - founded by his grandfather **John David Lewis**, in Market Stores, Llandysul, in 1892 - was now being run by **J. D. Lewis**'s two sons: Rhys Lewis (Huw Lewis's father) and **Edward Lewis**. John Lewis, the son of **Edward Lewis**, and a first cousin of Huw Lewis, subsequently returned from London to join Gwasg Gomer in 1959. After the death of Rhys Lewis in 1961 and of **Edward Lewis** in 1966, the two cousins took over the business. Following in the footsteps of his father, Huw Lewis concentrated on the printing side, while John Lewis continued his father's interest in publishing and in the administration of the company. In his autobiography *Creu Argraff*, published by the press in 2012, John Lewis testifies to the happy working relationship between the two cousins over four decades. Following Huw Lewis's retirement in 1995 the company continued under the leadership of John Lewis until his son, Jonathan Lewis, took over as Managing Director in the late 1990s.

The printing industry went through a period of revolution between the 1970s and 1990s with the introduction of phototypesetting and offset litho printing. Gwasg Gomer was at the forefront of such developments and invested heavily in modern technology, always striving to achieve the highest standards of printing. Huw Lewis was in his element on the shop floor and took a personal interest in the design and quality of all the work that came off the press. He chaired the Welsh Books Council's Design Panel with distinction for a number of years. He was also an avid reader and he took a keen interest in the whole range of books published by the press. He maintained a close relationship with writers, illustrators and book designers and enjoyed their company. As an active member of Undeb Cyhoeddwy'r Llyfrwerthwyr Cymru (the Welsh Union of Publishers and Booksellers), and especially in his role as chair of the Union, he was generous in his advice to a new generation of printer-publishers as they began to set up their businesses in Wales.

Huw Lewis was very much a people person and he loved to engage in conversation whether on the street in Llandysul or on the National Eisteddfod field. A natural storyteller with great wit, he was a popular figure in such circles. He also went out of his way to help others whenever possible.

He served on several national committees such as the BBC's Broadcasting Council for Wales (1982-87), the Courts of the National Library of Wales and of the National Eisteddfod. He was also engaged by the Prince's Trust as a mentor to young people who were trying to set up their own businesses. Most of his energies, however, were devoted to local causes. A faithful member of his local church, Penybont, Llandysul, he served as a deacon from 1972. While he remained a staunch Baptist he would on occasion accompany his wife and daughters to the local parish church. He served as secretary of the Baptist singing festival, Cymanfa Ganu Bedyddwyr Dyffryn Teifi, for over a quarter of a century. He loved singing and was a member of the choir originally known as Gleisiaid Teifi, conducted by Catherine Watkin and then Elwyn Davies. He was a founder member of the local dining club and he served on more than one occasion as president of Cymrodorion Llandysul. He worked tirelessly to establish a Welsh-language nursery school in Llandysul and also the bilingual secondary school, Ysgol Dyffryn Teifi, on whose governing body he served for many years.

He was very much a family man. He married Vera Williams, who hailed from Tregaron, in 1956 and they had two daughters: Nerys and Rhian. He was immensely proud of his family and doted on his five grandchildren taking great pride in their success.

Huw Lewis was a proud Welshman, a Cardi through and through and a much respected benefactor whose contribution within the local community was invaluable. His lasting legacy was his contribution to the growth and development of Gwasg Gomer during a period of immense change and his support for a new generation of printer-publishers which helped enable publishing in Wales to continue to flourish into the twenty-first century.

He passed away at his home Yr Hendre, Llandysul, on 11 December 2008, after a long illness. His funeral was held at Penybont chapel, Llandysul on 17 December followed by interment in the chapel cemetery, alongside his parents, his grandparents, **J. D. Lewis** and Hannah Lewis, and other family members.

Author

Gwerfyl Pierce Jones

Sources

Tributes in Welsh-language publications: *Barn*, 554, March 2009; *Seren Cymru*, 6 February 2009; *Y Garthen*, February 2009

John Lewis and Rheinalt Llwyd, *Creu Argraff: Atgofion Teulu Gwasg Gomer* (Llandysul 2012)

Personal information

Additional Links

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