

JONES, GARETH RICHARD VAUGHAN (1905 - 1935), journalist

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Name: Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones

Date of birth: 1905

Date of death: 1935

Parent: Ann Gwenllïan Jones (née Jones)

Parent: Edgar William Jones

Gender: Male

Occupation: journalist

Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages

Author: Rob Phillips

Gareth Jones was born on 13 August 1905 at Eryl, Romilly Road, Barry, the youngest of three children of **Edgar William Jones** (1868-1953), a schoolmaster, and his wife Ann Gwenllïan (née Jones, 1867-1965). He was first educated at home by his mother, and then attended Barry County School where his father was headmaster. His mother had worked as a tutor to the grandchildren of the industrialist **John Hughes** who founded the town of Hugheskova (modern day Donetsk) in Ukraine.

He was a gifted linguist and studied French at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (1922-1926) before gaining an exhibition scholarship to study French, German and Russian at Trinity College Cambridge where he graduated with a first class degree in 1929. He was fluent in these three languages as well as English and Welsh.

He took an interest in international affairs and in a letter sent to his parents in February 1929 he explains his desire to travel and report on the world:

I should consider myself a flabby little coward if I ever gave up the chance of good and interesting career for the mere thought of safety. I have no thought for a man whose acceptance or judgement of a post depends on the answer to the question: Will it give me a pension?... I have come to the conclusion that the only life I can live with interest and which can really be of use is one connected with foreign affairs and with men and women of today; not with the writers of centuries ago.

(NLW File 18)

After graduating from Cambridge, Jones spent a few months working on the foreign desk at The Times, but was told that he needed to gain more experience before he could be considered for a permanent position. In January 1930 he went to work as foreign affairs advisor for **David Lloyd George**, a man for whom he had great respect, and produced reports on developments within the British Empire, the League of Nations and the Soviet Union. He travelled to report on the rising political, economic and ethnic tensions in central Europe, especially in areas outside the new Germany but with large ethnic German populations, and on the crumbling of democratic institutions as exemplified by the rigged 'Brest Elections' in Poland. In August 1930 he was able to make his first visit to Hugheskova (then Stalino), where he saw food shortages and terrible conditions.

His time with Lloyd George was ended by funding cuts but Jones was recruited to work with PR Consultants Ivy Lee and Associates in New York early in 1931. In August 1931 he was sent on assignment along with Jack Heinz III to report on the five year plans in the Soviet Union, where he witnessed the deteriorating situation. Jones also interviewed Lenin's widow Nadezhda Krupskaya and later published his account in the *Western Mail*.

On his return to the UK Jones worked for Lloyd George for a short time before he was again travelling in Europe and writing for the *Western Mail*. He was in Leipzig on 30 January 1933 when Hitler became Chancellor and travelled to Berlin where he was able to meet with Hitler's secretary and was invited to fly with the Fuhrer in his private plane to a rally in Frankfurt. This formed the basis of 'With Hitler across Germany' published in the *Western Mail* on 28 February 1933.

In March 1933 Jones visited the Soviet Union to see first-hand the man-made famine which he had been researching for some time. After visiting Moscow he spent several days walking through eastern Ukraine and made detailed notes in his diaries on the effects of the food shortages and the wider terror. On 29 March 1933 his article telling the world of the terrible and unnecessary suffering he had seen in the Soviet Union was published in British and American newspapers, although some Moscow-based journalists such as Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* were quick to try to undermine his work.

From April 1933 to summer 1934 Jones worked as a journalist on the *Western Mail* in Cardiff. In October 1934 he set off on a 'World Tour' which would lead to a series of articles on the >USA under Roosevelt, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia and China. While travelling in Mongolia he was detained by Japanese soldiers. When released he was sent on what was supposedly a safe route through bandit country, where he was kidnapped and held for sixteen days. He was shot dead in Chahar Province, China, on 12 August 1935, the eve of his thirtieth birthday. The British Government strongly suspected that the Soviet authorities were responsible for his death, although there are suspicions that the Japanese were also involved. His ashes were interred in Merthyr Dyfan Cemetery, Barry.

After his death the *Western Mail* co-operated with an initiative to raise money for a scholarship in his memory, including the publication of *In Search of News* which contains a selection of Jones's articles.

Gareth Jones's papers, including the diaries in which he recorded notes for his articles, were donated to the National Library of Wales by his niece, Dr Margaret Siriol Colley. A selection of files has been digitised with support from the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation, the Ukrainian National Women's League of America and the Temerty Family Foundation. A plaque commemorating his role in uncovering the Holodomor in Ukraine was unveiled in the Old College, Aberystwyth in 2006, and in 2008 he was award the Ukrainian Order of Merit.

Author

Rob Phillips

Sources

NLW Archives: [Gareth Vaughan Jones Papers](#)

Margaret Siriol Colley, Nigel Linsan Colley, Naomi Field (ed.), *More than a grain of truth: the biography of Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones* (London 2020)

Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones: Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff 2018)

Nicholas Hall, [Jones, Gareth Richard Vaughan \(1905-1935\)](#), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

Further reading

NLW Archives: [Gareth Vaughan Jones](#)

Margaret Siriol Colley, *More than a grain of truth: the biography of Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones* (London 2020)

Ray Gamache, *Gareth Jones: Eyewitness to the Holodomor* (Cardiff 2018)

Martin Shipton, *Mr Jones - The Man Who Knew Too Much: The Life and Death of Gareth Jones* (Cardiff 2021)

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Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones, *Hero of Ukraine, (1905 -1935)*website, accessed August 2020

Wikipedia Article: Gareth Jones (journalist)

Images

NLW Archives: Gareth Jones Aged 6

NLW Archives: Gareth With His Mother Circa 1911

NLW Archives: Passport of Gareth Vaughan Jones, 1921-1930

NLW Archives: Portrait of Gareth Jones 1927

NLW Archives: Gareth as a student 1927

NLW Archives: Gareth Vaughan Jones circa 1930

NLW Archives: Passport of Gareth Vaughan Jones, 1930-1934

NLW Archives: Gareth Vaughan Jones in California 1934

NLW Archives: Portrait of Gareth Vaughan Jones 1934

NLW Archives: Outdoor Portrait of Gareth Vaughan Jones Circa 1934

NLW Archives: Gareth in Bangkok 1935

NLW Archives: Gareth at the magnificent site at Borobudur 1935

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