

DAVIES, EDWARD TEGLA (1880 - 1967), minister (Meth.) and writer

Name: Edward Tegla Davies
Date of birth: 1880
Date of death: 1967
Spouse: Jane Eleanor Davies (née Evans)
Child: Gwen Davies
Child: Dyddgu Jones (née Davies)
Child: Arfor Davies
Parent: Mary Ann Davies
Parent: William Davies
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Meth.) and writer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Religion
Author: Islwyn Ffowc Elis

Born 31 May 1880 at Hen Giât, Llandegla, Denbighshire, fourth of the six children of William and Mary Ann Davies. His father was a quarryman, who was badly injured in Moel Faen quarry but continued to work there and subsequently in Mwynglawdd chalk quarry, to ward off destitution. In 1893 the family moved to Pentre'r Bais (Gwynfryn) and in 1896 to Bwlch-gwyn. When he was 14 years old Edward became a pupil-teacher at Bwlch-gwyn school. Tom Arfor Davies, a young teacher at Bwlch-gwyn for a short period before his untimely death, awoke his interest in the history and literature of Wales.

He experienced a religious conversion after attending a preaching festival at Coedpoeth, and decided to enter the ministry. In 1901 he became a probationer and after a year on the Ffynnongroyw circuit he entered Didsbury College, Manchester. He served his ministry at Abergele, Leeds, Menai Bridge, Port Dinorwic, Tregarth (thrice), Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, Denbigh, Manchester (twice), Liverpool, Bangor and Coedpoeth.

In 1908 he married Jane Eleanor (Nel) Evans, Gwynlys Shop, Bwlchgwyn, and they had 3 children: Dyddgu, Arfor and Gwen. He retired in 1946 because of his wife's illness and moved to Bangor, where she died in 1948. He died 9 October 1967, and was buried in Gelli cemetery, Tregarth.

Although he never had a Welsh lesson at school nor went to university, he became one of the most prolific writers in Welsh. He benefited from his friendship with **Ifor Williams**, **T. Gwynn Jones**, **David Thomas** (Bangor, 1880 - 1967) and other writers. He was editor of *Y Winllan*, 1920-28; *Yr Efrdydd*, 1931-35; and the series, 'Cyfres Pobwn', 1944-50. His boys' stories which appeared in *Y Winllan* were later published as books. The first, *Hunangofiant Tomi* (1912), became very popular. It was followed by *Nedw* (1922), *Rhys Llwyd y lleuad* (1925), and *Y Doctor Bach* (1930). He published many books for children on legendary and Biblical characters, and an adaptation of the Welsh translation of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1931). His imagination is given rein in *Hen Ffrindiau* (1927), and the fantasies, *Tir y Dyneddon* (1921) and *Stori Sam* (1938). Although criticised for moralising and allegorising in these, their inventiveness and narrative are still marvellous. His only long novel, *Gwr Pen y Bryn* (1923), was initially serialised in *Yr Eurgrawn* and appeared in book form in 1923. Whatever its shortcomings, it is a milestone in the history of the Welsh novel because of its ordered plot and its penetrating study of a soul in anguish. It was translated into English by Nina Watkins as *The Master of Penybryn* (1975). He published only one other novel: the short satirical novel *Gyda'r Glannau* (1941). His short stories which appeared in magazines were collected together in *Y Llwybr Arián* (1934).

Apart from a number of religious books for young people, he published works from 1943 onwards were mostly volumes of essays: selections, mainly, of his weekly articles in *Yr Herald Cymraeg* from 1946 to 1953 under the pseudonym 'Eisteddwr' and of his radio talks. *Rhyfedd o fyd* (1950) reveals his satire at its most scathing, while the powerful illustrations of a creative preacher are a prominent feature of *Y Foel Faen* (1951), and *Ar ddisberod* (1954). His autobiography, *Gyda'r Blynyddoedd*, was followed by a volume of further reminiscences, *Gyda'r hwyr*, and *Y Ffordd*, and *Y Dyhead* which contain some of his sermons. He published more than 40 books and booklets in all.

Tegla regarded himself as a rebel all his life. Although he was one of the most prominent preachers and one of the most influential men of his denomination, he did not refrain from criticising and satirising organizational systems, whether religious or secular. He was one of the early promoters of Biblical criticism in Wales and *Llestri'r Trysor* (1914), which was edited by his friend **D. Tecwyn Evans**, and his preface to *Y Flodeugerdd Feiblaidd* (1940), caused quite a stir. But he was a Wesleyan through and through. He contributed articles on Wesleyan ministers to the *DWB* and an article on 'Welsh Wesleyan Methodism' in *The Methodist Church*, A.W. Harrison (ed., 1932), as well as articles for *Y Geiriadur Beiblaidd*, and he was on the joint-committee of the Methodist hymn book, 1924-26. He was president of the Welsh Methodist Assembly in 1937. For many years he was a member of the council and executive committee of the National Eisteddfod and a frequent eisteddfod adjudicator. He received an honorary M.A. degree of the University of Wales in 1924 for his contribution to Welsh literature, and a D.Litt. in 1958.

Author

Reverend Dr Islwyn Ffowc Elis

Sources

E. Tegla Davies, *Gyda'r blynyddoedd* (1952)

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Thomas Parry and Merfyn Morgan (ed.), *Llyfryddiaeth Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg* (1976), 245
personal knowledge from his daughter, Lady Dyddgu Elwyn Jones
Huw Ethall, *Tegla* (Swansea 1980)
Pennar Davies, *E. Tegla Davies* (1983)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Edward Tegla Davies](#)

Images

Geoff Charles, The Rev E Tegla Davies returns to his home

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