

HOWELLS, REES (1879 - 1950), missionary and founder of the Bible College, Swansea

Name: Rees Howells
Date of birth: 1879
Date of death: 1950
Spouse: Elizabeth Hannah Howells (née Jones)
Child: Samuel Rees Howells
Parent: Margaret Howells
Parent: Thomas Howells
Gender: Male
Occupation: missionary and founder of the Bible College, Swansea
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Huw Walters

Born 10 October 1879 in Brynaman, Carmarthenshire, 6th child of Thomas and Margaret Howells. He had few educational advantages and left Brynaman elementary school when he was 12 to begin work in a local tinplate mill. He emigrated to America in 1901 and worked in tinplate mills in Pittsburgh and Connellsville, Penn., where he was influenced by a Jewish evangelist, Maurice Reuben. He returned to Brynaman in 1904 and worked as a miner but attended evangelical conferences at Llandrindod and Keswick. Soon after marrying Elizabeth Hannah Jones of Brynaman, 21 December 1910, he went to the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, intending to enter the Congl. ministry but these plans were put aside when he received an invitation to become a missionary. He and his wife received training in colleges in Edinburgh and London and in 1915 they joined the South African General Mission with special responsibility for Rusitu mission station. After spending 5 years there they returned to Wales in 1920 and following a preaching tour in America in 1922 he decided to establish a Bible College in Wales, on the model of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, to train workers for the mission fields. Though he did not have the necessary capital - it is said that he possessed only 16 shillings at the time - he bought the Glynderwen estate in Swansea and the college was officially opened on Whit Monday 1924. He claimed to have paid for the venture by faith and prayers for financial contributions, and during the 1930s other Swansea estates were bought in Lower Sketty and Derwen-fawr, the buildings being adapted for use as a hospital and boarding school for the children of serving missionaries. The estate of **John Dillwyn-Llewelyn** in Penlle'rgaer was acquired at the end of the 1930s and he intended adapting the building as a school for Jewish refugees but the war thwarted this plan. Haile Selassie, emperor of Abyssinia (as it then was), spent a period in Penlle'rgaer on Howells' invitation in 1939 when he was exiled from his country by Benito Mussolini. In 1940 Howells published *God challenges the dictators*, a book which prophesied the end of the war and the fate of Adolf Hitler. His activities as Director of the Bible College expanded in the years after World War II and branches were established in Paris, Palestine and India. The story of his remarkable career, his consistent emphasis on the power of prayer and the manner in which he succeeded in putting the Bible College on firm foundations in spite of financial difficulties and lack of capital are testimony that he was an extraordinary character. He died 13 February 1950 and was succeeded by his son, Samuel Rees Howells, as Director of the college.

Author

Dr Huw Walters

Sources

South Wales Evening Post, 12 February 1950

Norman P. Grubb, *Rees Howells Intercessor* (Cambridge 1973)

Doris M. Ruscoe, *The Intercession of Rees Howells* (Guildford 1983)

Further Reading

UK WELLS: [Rees Howells](#) (accessed October 2019)

Wikipedia Article: [Rees Howells](#)

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Wikidata: Q7306969

Published date: 2001

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