

## REES, JOHN THOMAS (1857 - 1949), musician

**Name:** John Thomas Rees  
**Date of birth:** 1857  
**Date of death:** 1949  
**Spouse:** Elizabeth Rees (née Davies)  
**Parent:** Hannah Rees (née Morgan)  
**Parent:** Thomas Rees  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** musician  
**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Music  
**Authors:** David Ewart Parry Williams, Evan David Jones

Born 14 November 1857 at Llwynbedw, near Cwmgiedd, Brecknockshire, son of Thomas and Hannah (née Morgan) Rees. He had little schooling and began work as a pit-boy at the age of nine. Whilst working as a miner in Ystradgynlais, Rhondda Valley, and Aberdare, he acquired a sound musical discipline. He began to give music lessons when he was 17 ([Daniel Protheroe](#) was one of his pupils) and he mastered the sol-fa notation between 1876 and 1879 under the tuition of [D. W. Lewis](#), Brynaman. At twenty-one he gained some prominence as the composer of a cantata which he submitted for competition at a Treherbert eisteddfod. A modest fund raised by friends enabled him to study with [Joseph Parry](#) at Aberystwyth in 1879, but his financial resources were few and the outlook bleak until [David Jenkins](#) opened the way for him to teach sol-fa classes in Pen-y-garn. He went to Emporium, Kansas, in 1882 and gained his Mus. Bac. (Toronto) in 1889 (he later held a teaching appointment there, during a short visit to America). On his return to Wales in 1883 he settled at Pen-y-garn, near Aberystwyth, as tutor to an adult music class, conductor of rural choirs which performed oratorios and similar works, and subsequently as part-time lecturer at U.C.W. Aberystwyth and part-time music teacher at Tregaron county school. In 1895 he won the prize of £20 for the composition of a string quartet at the Aberdare national eisteddfod. He became known throughout the country as composer of a number of hymn-tunes and anthems, and as a conductor of cymanfaoedd canu and adjudicator at eisteddfodau. His predominant interest found expression in numerous compositions of a religious character which include: 'Duw sydd noddfa' (Aberdare national eisteddfod prize composition, 1890); 'Y Teulu Dedwydd' (cantata); 'Crist yr Andes' (children's cantata); 'Hosannah' and 'Christos' (settings of services for children). Other published compositions include his 'String Quartet' (1895); 'Y Trwbadŵr' (based on words from the poetry of [Dafydd ap Gwilym](#)) in association with S.M. Powell at Tregaron; and 'Hillsides of Wales' for violin and piano. He also edited a collection of hymn-tunes by [David Lewis](#), Llanrhystud, *Perorydd yr Ysgol Sul* (a collection of children's hymn-tunes and anthems), and was joint-editor of *Llyfr hymnau a thonau y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd* (1897) and *Emynau a thonau y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd a Wesleyaidd* (1927). He married Elizabeth Davies of Pen-y-garn in 1881 (she died in 1939); there were 8 children, 5 of whom were alive in 1955. He died 14 October 1949 and was buried at Y Garn cemetery.

### Authors

**Professor David Ewart Parry Williams**, (1900 - 1996)

**Evan David Jones**, (1903 - 1987)

### Sources

Personal knowledge

D. H. Lewis, *John Thomas Rees cofiant* (Llandysul 1955)

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Rees](#)

### Additional Links

NLW Archives: [J. T. Rees Papers](#)

VIAF: [26635556](#)

Wikidata: [Q6254476](#)

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