

THICKENS, JOHN (1865 - 1952), minister (Presb.), historian and author

Name: John Thickens
Date of birth: 1865
Date of death: 1952
Spouse: Cecilia Thickens (née Evans)
Parent: Sarah Thickens
Parent: David Thickens
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Presb.), historian and author
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Religion
Author: Gomer Morgan Roberts

Born 9 March 1865 at Abernancwta, Cwmystwyth, Cardiganshire, son of David and Sarah Thickens. His father died when he was young, and his mother moved with the family to Pentre, Rhondda Valley. There, in Nazareth chapel, he began to preach, and he trained for the ministry at Trefeca College. He was ordained in 1894, and that year he married Cecilia Evans of Dowlais (sister of Sir David W. Evans); they had five daughters. He became minister of Libanus, Dowlais (1892-94), and Tabernacl, Aberaeron (1894-1907). Whilst there he spent much time with his uncle, his mother's brother, **Joseph Jenkins** (1859 - 1929), who was a minister at New Quay, Cardiganshire. The outcome of their collaboration was the series of conferences which were held in south Cardiganshire, precursors to the 1904-05 Religious Revival. He moved to London in 1907 as pastor of Willesden Green church, and remained there until he retired in 1945. He lived variously at Aberaeron, Neath and Llanwrtyd Wells, eventually settling in Leamington Spa, where he died 29 November 1952; his ashes were transferred from Cambridge Crematorium to Henfynyw churchyard, near Aberaeron.

He was a notable preacher at the height of his power, and at times had fiery meetings. He was a mystic by nature, and despite his great interest in theology, his favourite study was the history and hymnody of the mystics. He was prominent in the life of his denomination, serving as Moderator of the South Wales Association (1938) and Moderator of the General Assembly (1945). He published a commentary on the Acts of the Apostles in 1925 and delivered the Davies Lecture in 1934, which was published as a substantial volume in 1938 under the title *Howel Harris yn Llundain*. He steeped himself in the history and ethos of the Presbyterian Church of Wales; he was chairman of the History Committee (1939-52), and he contributed a great deal to its journal. His astute articles on the Methodist 'fathers' appeared in the beautifully produced booklet published by the London Presbytery in 1935 to celebrate the bicentenary of the Methodist Revival. He was editor of *Y Drysorfa* (1929-33), to which he contributed much, as well as to *Y Traethodydd* and *Y Goleuad*. He had the natural instinct and meticulousness of the true historian, always insisting on consulting original sources. He tended to be diverted by minutiae, and that possibly is the weakness of his Davies Lecture. His pedantic and over-grammatical style was also a stumbling block for many of his admirers. He was a member of the committee for the *Welsh Methodist hymnal* (1927). He researched much of the history of the hymnwriters and their works, and prepared a useful handbook to accompany the collection, *Emynau a'u Hawduriad* (1947; 1961, 'new edition, revised, with additions', by **Gomer M. Roberts**). As much as he had written of his intended biography of his famous uncle, **Joseph Jenkins**, was published in *Y Drysorfa*, 1961-63.

Author

Reverend Gomer Morgan Roberts, (1904 - 1993)

Sources

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information from the Rev. D. Lewis Evans

personal acquaintance

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