

THOMAS, THOMAS JACOB ('Sarnicol'; 1873 - 1945), schoolmaster, writer and poet

Name: Thomas Jacob Thomas
Pseudonym: Sarnicol
Date of birth: 1873
Date of death: 1945
Parent: Mary Thomas (née Jacob)
Parent: David Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: schoolmaster, writer and poet
Area of activity: Education; Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Poetry
Author: Evan David Jones

Born 13 April 1873 at 'Sarnicol', a cottage near Rhos-yr-hafod, Capel Cynon, Cardiganshire, the fourth of the five children of David Thomas, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Mary (née Jacob). He was registered as Tom, the name of the third child of his parents who had died in infancy. His first school was the board school at Capel Cynon which was locally known as Pantygŷach and Clawddmelyn. He became a pupil-teacher there, but, following an altercation with his headmaster, he left to continue his education at Talgarreg school. Being a frail child his parents were advised to send him for a period to New Quay where there was a noted grammar school kept by C.J. Hughes. He stayed there for four years taking Department of Science and Art examinations. In 1891 he won a £20 scholarship at the University College of Wales, where he spent three sessions reading for the University of London B.Sc. degree. In 1894 he left for a teaching post in mathematics at the Hartley Institution in Southampton. In 1896 he obtained a post as science master at the Abergele intermediate school, where he found a more congenial atmosphere. During his stay at Abergele he took his final examination. In 1897 he migrated to the industrial valleys of south Wales, holding science posts at the following schools: Merthyr Tydfil, 1897-1901, Abertillery, 1901-13, Cyfarthfa Castle Boys', 1913-21. During his final year at Cyfarthfa he took the external B.A. degree of London University. In 1922 he was appointed first headmaster of the new Quakers Yard grammar school, Treharris, where he remained until his premature retirement owing to illhealth in August 1931. The remainder of his life was spent in Llywel, Laura Place, Aberystwyth, where he found kindred spirits interested in literature and etymology with whom he could discuss the subjects which, despite his science training, were nearest to his heart. He died 2 December 1945, and was buried at Bwlch-y-groes (Congl.) chapel cemetery in his native neighbourhood. His wife survived him.

He won the chair at the Abergavenny national eisteddfod in 1913 with his ode ' Aelwyd y Cymro ', and was in competition for the chair in London, 1909, Colwyn Bay, 1910, Wrexham, 1912, and Birkenhead, 1917. His *pryddest* at Bangor in 1931 was placed among the first three. He was one of the adjudicators of the *awdl* at Llanelli, 1930, and Bangor, 1943. He contributed much in prose and verse to the *Ymfynydd*, *Cymru*, *Y Geninen*, the *Western Mail*, the *London Kelt*, *Y Llenor*, *Y Ford Gron*, *Y Beirniad*, *Y Cymro*, and *The Merthyr Express*, for which he edited a Welsh column for many years. Many of his English poems appeared in the *Western Mail*, and he won several prizes for competitions in *John ôlondon* and *T.P.'s Weekly*. His chief publications were *Ar lan y môr a chaneuon eraill*, 1898, *Odlau Môr a Mynydd*, 1912, *Blodau drain duon*, 1935, *Storiâu ar gân*, 1936, *Catiau cwta*, 1940, and *Chwedlau cefn gwlad*, 1944. He had a manuscript volume ' Odlau'r aelwyd ', containing what he considered to be his best poems, ready for publication at the time of his death. The manuscript is at the National Library of Wales. He was notable for his skill as an epigrammatist and for his description of life and characters on his native heath around Banc Siôn Cwilt.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Ar Fanc Siŷ'n Cwilt (Llandysul 1972) (ed. J. Tysul Jones), 1972

Y Cardi cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Ceredigion, 11 October 1973

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