

THOMAS, WILLIAM JENKYN (1870 - 1959), schoolmaster and author

Name: William Jenkyn Thomas
Date of birth: 1870
Date of death: 1959
Spouse: Marian Rose Thomas (née Dixon?)
Parent: Catherine Thomas
Parent: John Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: schoolmaster and author
Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing
Author: Evan David Jones

Born 5 July 1870, the son of John Thomas, Bryncocyn, Llangywer, Merionethshire, and his wife Catherine who died when William was a child, and the family moved to Plas Madog, Llanuwchllyn. He went to Friars School, Bangor, before matriculating as a sizar at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1888; he had a scholarship in 1890 and graduated B.A. (class I part I in the classical tripos), and M.A. in 1896. After being a lecturer in classics at Bangor, 1891-96, he became headmaster of Aberdare county school. In 1905 he was appointed headmaster of the Grocers Company School at Hackney Downs, London, when it was taken over by London county council; he remained in post until his retirement in 1935. He took a prominent part in the Association of Headmasters. He was joint-secretary of the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, 1913-33; was made president in 1934 and re-elected for another year. He was a strong defender of his profession and did not hesitate to condemn any political interference in education, as when the governors of Pontypridd school refused to grant a holiday to the children on the occasion of a royal wedding in 1935, or when the Labour Party attempted to raise a committee in the same year to consider rewriting history books. He was harsh in his criticism of universities and the state for their reluctance in awarding worthy honours to teachers. **David Lloyd George** paid tribute to him in a preface to a souvenir booklet in celebration of his thirty years' headship at Hackney Downs. In 1893 he published a collection of penillion to be sung to harp accompaniment, and with E. Doughty *The new Latin Delectus* (1908-09). He edited an anthology of the poems of Sallust and Ovid in 1900, and two volumes for the ' Cameos of Literature ': *The harp of youth, a book of poetry for school and home* (1907) and *A book of English prose* (1909). With Charles W. Bailey he published *Letters to a young headmaster* (1927). Though he spent a lifetime in London he did not forget the needs of Wales. He edited *Cambrensia: a literary reading book for Welsh schools* (c. 1904), and published *The Welsh fairy book* (1907 and a number of reprints to 1995), *More Welsh fairy and folk tales* (1957), and a booklet *Heroes of Wales* (1912) based on sculptures in Cardiff City Hall. Some of his articles appeared in *Cymru* and *Wales* around 1894-95; and in *Wales*, 1911-15, there appeared a series of biographies by him entitled ' Forgotten Welshmen '. He addressed the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in 1941 on the same subject, urging the compiling and publishing of biographies of eminent Welsh persons [see *Trans. Cymm.*, 1941, 100-14]. For five years, if not more, he had appealed in lectures to the Guild of Graduates and on the radio for this project to be undertaken. He contributed to *Bywgraffiadur / DWB*. He made his home at 38 Windsor Road, Finchley, and he and his wife had at least two sons. His wife, Marian Rose (née Dixon?), died 22 October 1936 and he died 14 March 1959.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, AberdŶr

1871, 1881 Census

Juliette Wood, introduction to 1995 edition of *The Welsh fairy book* (Cardiff 1972)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Jenkyn Thomas](#)

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