

THOMAS, LOUIE MYFANWY ('Jane Ann Jones'; 1908 - 1968), novelist

Name: Louie Myfanwy Thomas
Pseudonym: Jane Ann Jones
Date of birth: 1908
Date of death: 1968
Spouse: Richard Thomas
Parent: Elizabeth Jane Davies (née Jones)
Parent: Walter Owen Davies
Gender: Male
Occupation: novelist
Area of activity: Literature and Writing
Author: Hedd ab Emlyn

Born 29 February 1908 in Primrose Cottage, Holway, Holywell, Flintshire, only child of Walter Owen Davies, master saddler and his wife, Elizabeth Jane (née Jones). The mother died 3 February 1909 aged 26 and the grandmother helped to rear the child. The family moved to Yscawen, Rhuddlan, where the father obtained work as a grocer, and Louie Myfanwy was educated at the Church elementary school and Rhyl secondary school (1920-24) where she gained her Central Welsh Board Senior School Certificate. She may have worked in Caernarfon, perhaps at a newspaper office, after having spent a period assisting her father in the shop (cf. the story 'Lol' in *Storiâu hen ferch*). She was appointed a clerk in the education dept. of Denbigh County Council 17 October 1927, later becoming secretary to J.C. Davies, Director of Education, and his successor Edward Rees. At this time she lived at Arwynfa, Borthyn, Ruthin, and by 1935 she is registered as living at Llwyni, Llanfair Road, Ruthin. The occupants are noted as Emily, Louie Myfanwy, Mary and William Henry Davies. W.H. Davies, a Meth. lay-preacher, was her father's brother, his wife was Mary and their daughter Emily. Myfanwy lived there for some years but was unhappy, being unable to share her uncle's narrow religion; he tended to be sanctimonious while she was more extravert. He used to assert 'God will provide' while she claimed that it was her wages which provided. This is echoed in her story 'Helaeth fynediad' in *Storiâu hen ferch*, 22.

Her relationship with her family in Llwyni is important, however, because of the frequent (but un-named) references to them in her work, especially *Y bryniau pell* and to a lesser extent, *Diwrnod yw ein bywyd*. Many of the situations and events in *Y bryniau pell* are autobiographical and she has many scathing references to preachers and ministers and to her own circumstances as an orphan and the subject of comment.

She married Richard Thomas, Chief Clerk in the Education Dept. of Denbighshire County Council, at Bolton registry office 5 April 1952 when she was 44. (Richard Thomas's sister and her husband lived in Bolton). The two lodged in Market Street, Ruthin, before moving to a flat in 6 Well Street. The marriage seems to have been a happy one: they did not have children but Richard Thomas had 2 daughters from his previous marriage. She suffered much ill-health. She had surgery in Cardiff but refused surgery for the cancer which she suffered. She was forced to resign because of her health in 1959. She and her husband moved to Carmel, Holywell in 1962 but she returned to Ruthin 2 years later, 2 months after her husband's death from lung cancer in September 1964, to 115 Parcydre. In her obituary in *Y Faner*, 1 February 1968, **Kate Roberts** says that Louie Myfanwy was unable to visit her husband in hospital and failed to be at his funeral because of the state of her health.

She had stayed for a time with Mrs. Bishop, Knapp House, Eardisland, near Ludlow, while she was recuperating after surgery. Mrs. Bishop kept The White Swan and according to one account Louie Myfanwy found the spot by accident after asking a bus driver for a suitable place to stay. Whether the story be true or not, the location is significant in that it was here, apparently, that she began to write (but see the story 'Lol' in *Storiâu hen ferch*). She had seen some pigs in a garden and began writing a children's story about them; this may have been the origin of stories, e.g. 'Siw a'r moch bach' in *Ann a Defi John*. See also the description of the cottage in *Diwrnod yw ein bywyd*.

Louie Myfanwy Thomas wrote under the name Jane Ann Jones, perhaps based on her mother's maiden name Elizabeth Jane Jones. However, she may never have known her mother's antecedents in any detail. She insisted on keeping her literary life a secret and an unremarkable and common name such as Jane Ann Jones would have prevented any suggestion of a connection. **Kate Roberts** in the obituary in *Y Faner* remarks: 'She kept the name Jane Ann Jones a secret between four of us for many years and no one knew who she was'. For a number of years none of her family, friends or office colleagues knew anything of her literary career. They knew she was an avid reader who often visited the local library to order new books reviewed in the *Liverpool Daily Post* but it was a surprise to many who knew her to learn that she was an author.

She won a £100 prize for a novel in a competition held by *Y Cymro* in 1953 (*Y Cymro*, 30 October 1953): the adjudicators were Islwyn Ffowc Elis, J. Roberts Williams and T. Bassett. Her pen-name was 'Jini Jos' and it was announced that the winner was Jane Ann Jones: 'The secret is to be kept', said *Y Cymro*. She competed periodically at the national eisteddfod and submitted *Diwrnod yw ein bywyd* in the novel competition at the Dolgellau national eisteddfod in 1949 under the name Ffanni Llwyd (see D.J. Williams's adjudication in *Cyfansoddiadau a Beirniadaethau* (1949), 153). One of her short stories, 'Trwy ddrych mewn dameg', appeared in *Y Cymro*, 9 April 1954, described as a skilful, concise, and intense story, and she wrote scripts and plays for the B.B.C. for some 10-15 years, giving up only when she was asked to change her style.

She published (under the name Jane Ann Jones) *Storiâu hen ferch* (Gwasg Aberystwyth, 1937); *Y bryniau pell* (Gwasg Gee, 1949); *Diwrnod yw ein bywyd* (Hughes a'i Fab, 1954); *Plant y Foty* (George Ronald, Cardiff, 1955); *Ann a Defi John* (Gwasg y Brython, 1958). George Ronald, Cardiff, had intended publishing a children's series, '*Storiâu Ann a Defi John*' and it is interesting that a photograph of Jane Ann Jones appeared on the back cover of *Plant y Foty* with a list of her other titles. The secret was obviously out by 1955. She was remembered as a quiet, unassuming and able person, but others remarked that she believed that **Kate Roberts** had never taken favourably to anything she had written. Judging from her work, she was a woman with an independent mind and critical tendency. She died in Ruthin hospital 25 January 1968.

Author

Hedd ab Emlyn

Sources

Personal research

Baner ac Amserau Cymru, 1 February 1968

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Louie Myfanwy Thomas](#)

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