

JONES, DAVID HUGH ('Dewi Arfon', 1833 - 1869), minister (CM), schoolmaster and poet

Name: David Hugh Jones
Pseudonym: Dewi Arfon
Date of birth: 1833
Date of death: 1869
Parent: Ellen Jones
Parent: Hugh Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (CM), schoolmaster and poet
Area of activity: Education; Poetry; Religion
Author: Derwyn Jones

Born in Ty Du, Llanberis, Caernarfonshire, 6th July 1833, to Hugh and Ellen Jones. He was the eldest of 4 children; one brother was **Griffth Hugh Jones**, ('Gutyn Arfon'), composer of the hymn-tune 'Llef', written in memory of Dewi Arfon. When Dewi Arfon was about 5, he went to a school kept by Ellis Thomas, in Capel Coch, Llanberis, and then to a school kept by John Evans, Ceunant Coch. He left school at 11, and went to work with his father in the quarry. He studied assiduously during his leisure hours and mastered the rules of poetry, music, arithmetic and English and Welsh grammar. In the spring of 1853, he caught a chill and was very ill in the early summer of that year. He returned to the British School, Dolbadarn, kept by David Evans (later the Reverend David Evans of Dolgellau), intending to become a school-teacher. After consulting **John Phillips**, Bangor (1810 - 1867) he decided to go to Borough Road College, London, and to mark the occasion, a testimonial was presented to him in January 1856 by the Literary Society of Capel Coch, Llanberis. He went at his own expense to Borough Road, and after a year gained a teacher's certificate, second class. For four years after that, he was a teacher in the British School, Llanrwst. He became a close friend of **Trebor Mai** (Robert Williams) and other local poets. While in Llanrwst he became interested in poetry. He was the teacher when **John Lloyd Williams**, musician and botanist, was a pupil there.

Towards the end of this period, he began to preach. However, it was in Capel Coch, Llanberis, in 1861, that he was officially accepted by his denomination to be a minister, and in 1862, he went as a student to the school kept by **Eben Fardd** (Ebenezer Thomas) in Clynnog. He was accepted as a minister to serve the whole circuit of the Arfon Presbytery in 1863. During **Eben Fardd**'s illness he taught in the school, and he followed **Eben Fardd** in the post. He was ordained to the full work of the ministry in the Association held at Llangefni in June 1867. He was a better teacher than **Eben Fardd**, because of his lively manner while in school. A school building and a house were built for him, but he died before he could enter either.

His health was frail. He had to leave Clynnog, and return to Ty Du, Llanberis, where he died on Christmas morning, 1869. He was buried in the cemetery at Nant Peris, and money collected as a testimonial to him during his illness was used to erect a gravestone. A strange story is told about his death: between five and six in the morning, he called his sister and asked her to set the alarm clock to strike at 9, and, at exactly 9 o'clock, he died. He was considered to be a talented musician, though he was not a singer, and he was very popular as an adjudicator for music and poetry. He was considered to be a good poet, and, according to his obituary, his ode 'Tywylltiad yr Ysbryd Glân ar Ddydd y Pentecost' came high on the list in the competition in the Denbigh *eisteddfod* of 1860. but a quotation from the poem in the adjudication shows that he was 'Awenydd', the third of four competitors.

He excelled as a writer of englynion, especially epitaphs for gravestones, and his best-known *englyn* was his epitaph for **John Jones** (1796 - 1857), Talysarn. This is not on **John Jones**'s grave in the cemetery in Llanllyfni, but on the memorial column near Tanycastell, his old home in Dolwyddelan.

Author

Derwyn Jones

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