

JONES, JOHN (1786 - 1865), printer and inventor

Name: John Jones
Date of birth: 1786
Date of death: 1865
Spouse: Jane Jones (née Evans)
Child: Evan Jones
Child: Owen Evans-Jones
Child: Edward Jones
Parent: Jane Jones
Parent: Ismael Davies
Gender: Male
Occupation: printer and inventor
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Engineering, Construction, Naval Architecture and Surveying; Printing and Publishing
Author: Gerald Morgan

Baptized 7 May 1786, son of Ismael Davies (son of **Dafydd Jones**, Trefriw (1708? - 1785)) and Jane, his wife. After **Dafydd Jones** died in 1785, Ismael Davies continued working his father's printing press at Bryn Pyll, Trefriw. According to family tradition, John Jones was apprenticed to a blacksmith, but he also learnt the printer's craft, and from 1810 onwards there is a noticeable improvement in the output of Trefriw press which can be attributed to the work of John, although his name does not appear on the output (other than in *englynion* addressed to patrons and others) until 1817, when Ismael died. He married Jane Evans in 1824; in 1825 he moved to 29, Station Road, Llanrwst, and again in 1836 to 30, Denbigh Road. He kept a paper and bookshop, and printed much miscellaneous work for the locality. Sometime (? before 1817) he constructed three presses to the Ruthven design, so called after its inventor, Alexander Ruthven, which he then used for all his printing work. He also learnt to cast his own type and used many of his own letters and characters for the rest of his life. Towards the end of his life he also invented a machine for cutting paper. This machine and examples of his type are at the Museum of Welsh Life, St. Fagans, as well as many of the ballad illustrations; one of his presses is at South Kensington Science Museum. He was one of the most productive printers of ballads, and one of his itinerant booksellers was **Thomas Williams**, 'Capelulo'. The Trefriw/Llanrwst press was responsible for printing the long series of almanacs bearing the title *Y Cyfaill* The imprint declares that they were printed in Dublin, but this was a ruse to avoid paying tax. When the tax was discontinued in 1834, the almanacs were openly printed at Llanrwst. John Jones printed the works of important contemporary authors such as **William Williams** 'Caledfryn', **Robert Jones**, Rhoslan, **Ieuan Glan Geirionnydd**, **John Elias**, **Gwilym Hiraethog**, as well as classical works such as *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*, *Egluryn Ffraethineb* and a number of works by **Twm o'r Nant**. He was also responsible for a number of periodicals and many odd, recreative or unusual booklets, such as a version of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Hanes Judas Iscariot*, *Hanes y Lleuad*, *Bywyd Turpin Leidr* and *Faunula Grustensis*, as well as *Gwaith Aristotle* (first printed by his brother Robert (1803 - 1850) at Conwy in 1826; Robert also printed at Pwllheli and Bangor). John Jones produced the smallest books ever printed in Welsh; but his printing masterpieces were *Mawl yr Arglwydd* by **John Ellis** (1816) and *Gronoviana* (1860), the first edition of the complete works of **Goronwy Owen**. These poems were collected by John Jones' son Edward (1826-81), father of **Griffith Hartwell Jones**, author of *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement* (1915). John Jones who was diverting company, was cultured and composed verse under the pseudonym 'Pyll'. After his death 19 March 1865, his son Owen Evans-Jones continued the business, without much enthusiasm, until his death in 1887. His grandson J.J. Lloyd then owned it until 1935 when the shop was closed after the family had been in the printing trade over five generations from 1776 until 1935. Evan Jones (1830 - 1918), second son of John Jones, was a printer at Porthmadog.

Author

Gerald Morgan

Sources

Gerald Morgan, *Y dyn a wnaeth argraff: bywyd a gwaith yr argraffydd hynod John Jones, Lanrwst* (Llanrwst 1982)

personal research

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 12004B](#)-[NLW MS 12021B](#)

Further reading

Coflein: [LLANRWST PRINTING OFFICE](#)

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