

RICHARDS, WILLIAM LESLIE (1916-1989), Scholar, teacher, poet and author

Name: William Leslie Richards

Date of birth: 1916

Date of death: 1989

Gender: Male

Occupation: Scholar, teacher, poet and author

Area of activity: Education; Literature and Writing; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages

Author: Huw Ceiriog Jones

Born at Cwm, Capel Isaac, near Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, the second son of William Richards and his wife Anne (née Davies). William and Anne had four children, David Whitson (1915-1983), William Leslie, Eleanor Heddwen (1919-1966), and Benjamin Hugh (1924-). The parents were small-holders.

He was educated at Capel Isaac primary school, Llandeilo Grammar School, and the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he graduated with a first-class honours degree in Welsh in 1938. From 1939 to 1940 he was a student-lecturer in the Welsh Department. When the Second World War broke out he registered as a conscientious objector, and he was sent to work in the forest near Llandovery. He later joined the Quakers Ambulance Unit and worked in England, Germany and Poland. He had already started research on the poetry of **Dafydd Llwyd** o Fathafarn before the war and in 1946 he returned to Aberystwyth to continue with the work. He was awarded an M.A. degree in 1947. During his time at the college he won a travelling scholarship in 1937, when he visited Germany, and he was awarded the T. E. Ellis Memorial Prize for an essay in 1939. He was also prominent in college societies, such as the Geltaidd Society and the Debates Union. He was a member of *The Dragon's* editorial board and Secretary of the Inter-col Eisteddfod.

In 1947 he joined the staff of the Welsh Department of Llandeilo Grammar School and he later became Head of the Department. When education was reorganized in Llandeilo in 1969 he moved to become head of Welsh at Ysgol Tre-gib, serving as deputy headmaster of the school from 1975 until his retirement in 1981.

He published three novels, *Yr Etifeddion* (1956), *Llanw a Thrai* (1958) and *Cynffon o Wellt* (1960), and five volumes of poetry, *Telyn Teilo* (1957), *Bro a Bryniau* (1963), *Dail yr Hydre* (1968), *Adledd* (1973) and *Cerddi'r Cyfnos* (1986). In 1965 the University of Wales Press published his edition of the poems of **Dafydd Llwyd** o Fathafarn, a work which won the Sir Ellis Griffith Memorial Prize. He also co-edited, with D. H. Culpitt, the volume *Y Cawr o Rydcymerau: cerddi coffa i'r diweddar Ddr. D. J. Williams* (1970).

In addition to teaching generations of children in Llandeilo he also contributed to the field of education through his writings. His volume *Ffurfiâu'r Awen: detholiad o farddoniaeth Gymraeg* (1961) was a set book for secondary schools. He was also joint editor, with **H. Meurig Evans** and W. J. Harries, of four volumes of *Cymraeg Heddiw*. The periodical *Barn* came into being in 1962, and he was the first editor of its education section. He was a regular contributor to national periodicals, such as *Y Llenor*, *Llên Cymru*, *Taliesin*, *Y Traethodydd*, *Y Genhinen*, *Yr Efrdydd*, *Yr Einion* and *Blodau'r Ffair*. He was a prominent adjudicator at eisteddfodau, including the adjudication of the crown competition at Cardigan National Eisteddfod in 1976. He was a member of numerous national societies, including The Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion and the Union of Welsh Authors. He was honoured by the Gorsedd of Bards with the white robe at the Pembrokeshire National Eisteddfod in 1972. Two years earlier he had been Chairman of the Literature Committee at Ammanford National Eisteddfod.

Locally he was active in all literary circles. He was one of the founder members of Llandeilo Literary Circle, the first guest at Llandeilo's Diners' Club, a compere at nosweithiau llawen, and a guest speaker. He was also interested in drama, as actor and producer. He was one of the founders of Llandeilo Welsh School (now Ysgol Teilo Sant), and a supporter and speaker in Plaid Cymru's early campaigns in Carmarthenshire. He was also a deacon and Secretary of Capel Newydd, Llandeilo, for many years.

His main interest in his spare time was his family and reading. He had strong convictions, especially relating to the Welsh language, his own locality and pacifism. After getting to know him well he proved to be entertaining company and very humorous. In appearance he was fairly short and of dark complexion, with a round countenance, like many of his family.

In 1942 he married Elizabeth Mair Pamela Jones (1920-2002), Ffosyresgob, Capel Isaac, and they had four children. He died in Glangwili Hospital, Carmarthen, on 27 December 1989, after a short illness. On 30 December, after a public funeral service at Y Capel Newydd, Llandeilo, his remains were buried with his forefathers in Siloam Cemetery, Pontargothi.

Author

Huw Ceiriog Jones

Sources

Cofio W. Leslie Richards (Denbigh 1996), edited by Eleri Davies. Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1996. This volume contains tributes by two close friends, Dyfnallt Morgan and Emlyn Evans, and numerous photographs

There is a small collection of archives, along with an audio tape of the poet which was prepared originally by Carmarthenshire County Library, in the National Library of Wales

Information from the family

personal knowledge

Additional Links

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