

REES, FLORENCE GWENDOLEN (1906-1994), helminthologist (one who studies worms, particularly parasitic ones), Professor of Zoology

Name: Florence Gwendolen Rees
Date of birth: 1906
Date of death: 1994
Gender: Female
Occupation: helminthologist (one who studies worms, particularly parasitic ones), Professor of Zoology
Area of activity: Medicine; Science and Mathematics
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Gwendolen (Gwen) Rees was born 3 July 1906, in Abercynon, Glamorganshire, the younger daughter of Ebenezer Rees (1865-1948) and Elizabeth Agnes (née Jones), of Cilybebyll (1877-1921). The family soon moved to 4 Elm Grove, Aberdare when her father was appointed Superintendent of Police.

She was educated at the Girls' Grammar School, Aberdare, and University of Wales, Cardiff, where she graduated BSc in zoology in 1927 followed by one year teacher training to qualify for the Board of Education Certificate in 1928. With a scholarship awarded by Aberdare Hall where she had resided, she returned to the zoology department as a research student in parasitology and gained her PhD degree in 1930 for commendable work on infested snails which caused liver fluke disease in flocks of sheep.

Consequently she was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Zoology at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1930, and lecturer in 1937. She acquired a reputation for faultless experimental technique and meticulous attention to detail, with a gift as an illustrator. She took students on 2-3 weeks' visits to museums in Berlin, Leningrad, Moscow and Paris, and research stations in Scotland, Denmark, Spain and Portugal. In addition to her own research projects, she supervised the work of many MSc and PhD candidates.

She presented influential lectures on her work during her three months as a visiting scientist of the University of Ghana in 1961, but was too modest to accept invitations to spend one-year periods abroad at other universities. She was distinguished for her definitive studies of the life history strategies of certain parasitic worms, which threw new light on the relationships of parasites to non-vertebrate hosts. A selection of her numerous published research papers, mainly in the *Journal of Parasitology*, earned her a DSc degree of the University of Wales in 1942 and promotion as Senior Lecturer (1946) and Reader (1966). In 1971 she was appointed Professor of Zoology following her election as a Fellow of the Royal Society and Fellow of the Institute of Biology. As Professor Emeritus after retirement in 1973 she published new papers on her continued research.

She regularly attended meetings of the International Congress of Parasitology. She was elected Honorary Member of the American Society of Parasitologists (1975), and of the British Society for Parasitology (1976). The Linnean Society presented her with their medal for services to zoology in 1990.

She was unmarried and lived at Grey Mist, North Road, Aberystwyth. She died 4 October 1994 in the local hospital.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

Who was who? 1991-1995

Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society 1997, Vol. 43

Portreadau o Wyddonwyr o Gymry: Yr Athro Emeritws Gwendolen Rees FRS *Y Gwyddonydd*, 1992, Vol. 29, 66

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [F. Gwendolen Rees](#)

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