

HUGHES, HUGH JOHN (1912-1978), schoolteacher, author, editor and reviewer

Name: Hugh John Hughes
Date of birth: 1912
Date of death: 1978
Gender: Male
Occupation: schoolteacher, author, editor and reviewer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing
Author: Arwyn Lloyd Hughes

Hugh J. Hughes was born 18 August 1912 at Bwlch-gwyn, Garndolbenmaen, Caernarfonshire, the elder of the two sons of Thomas Hughes, farmer, and his wife Mary Jane (née Jones). (The brothers **John Roberts**, Llangwm, and **Robert Roberts**, Clynnog, eminent preachers with the Calvinistic Methodists in their day, were among his ancestors).

He was educated at the council school Brynengan (1917-25), Pen-y-groes county school (1925-31); (he won the chairs at the first two Urdd National Eisteddfodau at Corwen, 1929, and Caernarfon, 1930); University College of North Wales, Bangor (1931-36; BA, 1934 with honours in Welsh; diploma in education, 1935.

He began researching into the life and work of **Thomas Price** ('Carnhuanawc') during the 1935-36 session for the MA degree. However, much to his disappointment, he did not complete the study due to the demands of his employment on his time. He taught Welsh and Latin (and woodwork for a short while only) at Barmouth county school, 1936-57, and was head of the department of Welsh and deputy headmaster of Ysgol Arudwy, Harlech, from 1957 until his retirement in 1976. A genial and most dependable person, he was a dedicated and conscientious schoolteacher throughout his career. He served in the Army (with the Royal Engineers) during November 1940 - March 1946.

The University of Wales Press published his volume *Gwerthfawrogi Llenyddiaeth* (1959) which consists of 'a selection of poetry and prose chosen as suitable for use as exercises...by senior pupils in secondary schools and first year students in colleges'. As well as being a most useful tool for the teacher, this volume also reflects the author's obvious scholarship, culture and literary taste. He revised *O Gorllannau y Defaid* (1905), the historical novel by **Annie Harriet Hughes**. ('Gwyneth Vaughan') This new edition, for libraries only, was published by Gwasg Gee in 1969. He also edited and contributed to the volume *Gŵr wrth Gerdd: John Hughes 1896-1968* (1973). Between November 1955 and December 1956 he published in *Yr Athro* a detailed series of '[Philological] notes on some of the poems in Blodeugerdd o'r Ddeunawfed Ganrif' aimed at Sixth Form pupils. He published many well-crafted reviews in *Barddas*, *Barn*, *Journal of the Merioneth History & Record Society*, *Genhinen* and *Taliesin* during 1967-78.

D. Tecwyn Lloyd said of H. J. Hughes (in trans.): 'Reviewing was his main contribution and in that capacity he was always thorough and completely fair; ...the purity and consistent standard of his work set an example to all of us who write in Welsh...his best was best indeed'. Among his last contributions was a warm portrait of Morris Jones ('Morus Cyfannedd'; 1895-1982), the country poet from Arthog, published in *Barddas*, 20 (June, 1978), 1-2. He served as chairman of a sub-committee responsible to the Merioneth Education Committee for producing *Atlas Meirionydd* (1974) under the editorship of Geraint Bowen.

He was became an 'Honorary Member' of the Gorsedd of Bards (Druidic Order) at the National Eisteddfod, Bala, 1967. He was a member of the Council of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society, from 1967 until his death. He held popular evening classes in Arudwy on the cynganeddion under the auspices of the WEA. He had a deep knowledge of the intricacies of poetic art (cerdd dafod), and being a teacher by instinct he took great pleasure in passing that knowledge on to others. A further instance of this was his participation in a television series, '*Swyn y Glec*', broadcast by BBC Wales between October 1970 and March 1971 in which he gave lessons on the cynganeddion. Three of his poems were included in *Awen Meirion* (1961) in which Emlyn Evans, the general editor, paid him a special tribute in the preface for his thorough work in connection with this volume. A translation by him of an unknown English hymn was included (no.128) in *Caneuon Ffydd* (2001).

He also enjoyed tracing the meanings of Welsh place-names and the derivation of words, but this is not surprising since he was a former student and an enthusiastic admirer of **Sir Ifor Williams**. Needless to say, he was an ardent patron of all things Welsh within his community like the Talsarnau Eisteddfod from its inception as well as other cultural societies. According to John Ieuan Jones, a local poet and friend of his, H. J. Hughes was 'an interesting conversationalist who embodied the best of rural Eifionydd in his bearing and his unassuming personality'.

He married 10 February 1940 Ann(ie) Laura Jones, Dyffryn Arudwy (who died 28 October 1977); four daughters and one son were born to them. He died suddenly at East Glamorgan Hospital on 13 November 1978 at 66 years of age whilst visiting Cardiff. He was buried in St Michael's churchyard, Llanfihangel-y-traethau, Ynys, Talsarnau, Gwynedd.

Author

Arwyn Lloyd Hughes

Sources

H. J. Hughes Papers in the Merionethshire Record Office, Dolgellau

information from members of his family, especially from his son, Huw Geraint Hughes, Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and his brother, Emeritus Professor Thomas Jones Hughes, Dublin

Emlyn Evans (gen. ed.), *Awen Meirion* (Llandybie 1961), 5, 136

Taliesin, 37 (December 1978), 5

Llais Arudwy, 40 (December 1978)

personal knowledge

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