



HANES PLAID

Plaid Cymru History Association Newsletter

Edition 5

Autumn 2023

Penyberth - New Research Published



You can listen to a recording of the lecture by Keith Bush - and read the full text in both languages - go to the Plaid History website, www.hanesplaidcymru.org

The Three - a striking portrait of the three heroes of Penyberth by the artist Ifor Davies on display at the National Eisteddfod's Lle Celf this year

New research shows that the controversial transfer of the Penyberth Bombing School trial from Wales to London was engineered by the Chief Constable of Caernarvonshire rather than the Westminster government.

The details were revealed in a lecture by the legal specialist Keith Bush to the Plaid Cymru History Society in a special lecture at the National Eisteddfod at Boduan, near Pwllheli.

Up to now London Government politicians have tended to be blamed: former Prime Minister David Lloyd-George was prominent among those who condemned the government of the day.

Although brought up in Arfon himself, the Chief Constable Edward Williams was determined to prevent the growth of the national party, Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. After the jury failed to agree on a verdict at the first trial in Caernarfon, he urged the authorities to move the case to the Old Bailey. And that, in the end, took place.

Ironically, the outcome of his zeal for 'the law of England' and the British order in general had the effect of transforming the Penyberth case from being a matter of primarily local interest to one that heightened patriotic sentiment throughout Wales.



On the trail of the green

Study of the early history of Plaid Cymru has raised a knotty question.

Glyn Tomos, Caernarfon, is studying the party's origins, in particular the key role played by its first ever general secretary, HR Jones and two sisters, Mai and Priscie Roberts from Deiniolen, Arfon who played an active role in the movement.

He has heard that Plaid Cymru chose to use the colour green in its campaigning after Priscie attended a meeting wearing a green dress.

Can anyone throw light on this interesting story?

Planning the Centenary

Work has started on planning an ambitious programme of activities to mark the centenary of Plaid Cymru in 2025.

The party has set up a special working party to set out the way ahead. Don't forget that you can contribute your ideas via the History Society - see the contact panel for an email address. We want to see activities of all sorts taking place throughout the country during the months leading up to August 2025.

Summer School Outing



Frongoch camp visit

Delegates to this year's Plaid Summer School took a break from their tough agenda planning future elections to study some of the lessons of our nation's history.

On a rainy July afternoon, a party set out from the Urdd camp at Glan-llyn to visit the Tryweryn reservoir and the nearby site of the Frongoch internment camp, where some 1,800 Irishmen were held following the Easter Rising in 1916.

A session was also held on the work of the Plaid Cymru History Society, with a contribution by Society chairman Dafydd Williams.



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Fighting for Wales Before the Foundation of Plaid

The history of the great poet, T.Gwynn Jones (1871-1949)

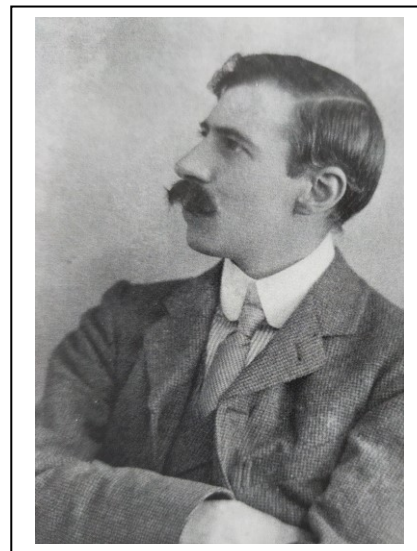
Review of the Welsh language biography 'Byd Gwynn' by Alan Llwyd

We have good reason to be grateful to the poet and author Alan Llwyd, who was brought up in the Llŷn peninsula and now lives in Morriston. His *awdl*, a poem in strict metres on the subject Llif (stream, or flow) ensured that the chair could be awarded this year, providing a real climax for the successful Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod.

By now Alan Llwyd has established himself as one of Wales' outstanding poets and writers. His output is astonishing, both in quality and quantity, and includes a number of detailed biographies of Welsh poets, among them T. Gwynn Jones.

Today people remember T. Gwynn Jones as one of the leading poets of the twentieth century but he was much more - for decades a hardworking journalist, novelist, critic and adjudicator as well as a translator and linguist. And a committed pacifist and a fiery nationalist.

Alan Llwyd paints a detailed picture of his life from his upbringing in Denbighshire as son of a struggling tenant farmer. Although his family's straitened circumstances ruled out university, Gwynn's sheer talent ensured a career as a journalist in Welsh and English



newspapers such as the *Cymro* and the *North Wales Times*. But he also contributed substantially to the cultural life of Wales. At the age of 17 he published a poem in *Y Faner* in support of Welsh people's fight against being forced to pay tithes to the established Church of England, and from then on he would occupy a key role in the literary life of his country.

In 1902 he carried off the Eisteddfod Chair with his poem *Ymadawiad Arthur*, making purposeful use of the complex Welsh mode of *cynganedd* to create a special effect; as Alan Llwyd explains, "not throwing consonants idly around without regard to the meaning of the words". In this respect, he was very different to many other poets, such as Hwfa Môn and



Dyfed; and before long Gwynn would find himself in the middle of a fierce debate about poetic standards. Critics would accuse him of resurrecting antiquated words that no-one understood, but Gwynn was more than ready to stand his ground and use his journalistic skills to fight for raising the standards of the Welsh language and experiment with new measures.

Cynghanedd, according to Gwynn, was the learned term for what ordinary people called a 'cwlwm', a knot or link. As a schoolboy he came to know these links by ear before learning the rules, and coming to love them.

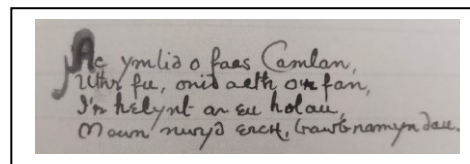
He succeeded in surmounting every obstacle, moving from his ill-paid journalistic career to become a cataloguer and biographer in the National Library in Aberystwyth, and in 1919 a lecturer, and finally Professor of Welsh Literature in University College, Aberystwyth. Alan Llwyd also records Gwynn's marriage and happy family life.

Gwynn became an accomplished linguist and translator in a number of European languages, and especially the Celtic languages. He had learnt the Breton language before the visit in 1904 of the Celtic Congress to Caernarfon, and Gwynn played an active role as a member of the local organising committee. Later on he set out to master Irish, seriously considering academic posts in Ireland.

Throughout his life T.Gwynn Jones was a convinced nationalist, but it is interesting to explore exactly what that meant during the course of his life. Gwynn's father was a keen Liberal: he was forced to leave the farm at which he was tenant because of his opposition to the Tories during the 'tithe war' in rural Wales. The young Gwynn also supported the Liberal cause, enthusiastically

so during the period in the 1890s when the Cymru Fydd movement was campaigning for self-government. In 1903, he composed a poem in Welsh praising David Lloyd George, 'our Dafydd of silver tongue, and a heart of fire'.

Disillusion with the Liberal Party followed the failure of Cymru Fydd and the support of many Liberal leaders for the First World War. Gwynn was a lifelong convinced pacifist, and was profoundly disappointed by the 'dogs of war', politicians and ministers of religion who urged young people to go to their deaths in the slaughter. As a socialist as well as a fervent nationalist, by 1918 he was attracted to the Labour Party, telling a close friend that he had (like DJ Williams) joined the ILP.



A verse from the awdl 'Ymadawiad Arthur' in T.Gwynn Jones' writing

However, there was no question whose side he was on when the Easter Rising took place in Ireland in 1916: if England had the right to fight, then so did Ireland, he said.

In 1923, Gwynn chaired a meeting of the 'Tair G' (the three Gs, Y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol Gymreig or The Welsh National Society), one of the meetings that would lead to the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. It is not known what was his reaction to the suggestion voiced at that meeting by Saunders Lewis to set up an 'army' of volunteers who would conduct military drill - it is unlikely he would have been in favour, and the idea found little support at the time. Could that be one reason why, curiously,



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there is no evidence that this convinced nationalist ever joined the nationalist party launched in 1925. Indeed, some years later, he would admit that his friendship with one poet had cooled because of the latter's support for Plaid Cymru.

By 1943 however, Gwynn was prominent among those who nominated Saunders Lewis as Plaid Cymru's candidate in the University of Wales by-election, even though he was running against W.J. Gruffydd for the Liberal Party. Gruffydd had been a close friend of Gwynn's since his youth.

A great poet, and an emotional and complex character, T.Gwynn Jones stands out as a leading figure in the history of Wales, and his story is well worth remembering.

Dafydd Williams

Join Plaid History

You are very welcome to join the Plaid Cymru History Association - membership is open both to individuals and to party branches.

A strong membership helps us identify and safeguard important records, and promote activities to celebrate the contribution made by Plaid members past and present.

Ideally we would like to see a number of Plaid History groups, making use of the resources of the National Library and each of Wales' county archives.

How to join? Go to the Plaid History website (www.hanesplaidcymru.org), follow 'Menu' at the top and then 'Membership'.

Contact Us

Have you got historical items you would like to hand over for safekeeping to the Plaid Cymru History Society? You can contact Plaid History's Secretary Eluned Bush by emailing history@hanesplaidcymru.org



Arfon Celebrating Fifty Years

People in the Arfon area aim to celebrate the half century of Plaid Cymru representation that has taken place since Dafydd Wigley's election victory in February 1974.

And the party has already started - with a lively evening in the company of Dafydd and his successors in Galeri, Caernarfon recently.

Photos: The audience enjoying the recent Arfon celebration; and Plaid Cymru's Arfon MPs since 1974, Hywel Williams, Liz Saville Roberts and Dafydd Wigley



Back in 1974 - Dafydd and Elinor after the historic count



Plaid Cymru History Website

Among other items of interest, the Plaid Cymru History Association's website is carrying tributes to two well respected members who died during the year - former Councillor Brian Arnold, Ynysybwl and the academic and author Charlotte Aull Davies, Morriston.

Ewch at: www.hanesplaidcymru.org
And our Facebook page [@hanesplaidcymru](https://www.facebook.com/hanesplaidcymru)

