

Obituary for a Good Guy
PROFESSOR GARETH ELWYN JONES,
MBE, MA, MEd, PhD, DLitt, FRHistS,
Emeritus Professor of Education,
University of Wales,
Hon Res Fellow, Swansea Metropolitan University
1939–2013

If you were writing a brief obituary of Gareth it might read something like this. He was professor of Education at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth and, uniquely, the only person to sit on both the English National Curriculum's History Working Group (HWG) and its equivalent Welsh Committee. After a grammar school education at Whitland, in south-west Wales, and after spending his undergraduate and MA years at the University College of Swansea (now Swansea University), Gareth became a teacher, starting his career in Croydon. He moved to become a member of staff at Cardiff College of Education in 1965. In 1969, he moved to Swansea College of Education before moving on to the Department of Education at the University College of Swansea from where he wrote most of his prestigious works on the history of education in Wales.

However, this would be to significantly underestimate his contribution to the field. Throughout his professional career, having been influenced considerably by Sir Glanmor Williams (whom he regarded as one of the greatest twentieth-century Welsh historians) and John Fines, he strived to promote and move forward the subject of the history of education in Wales, establishing it as a respected discipline with its own traditions. Previously, Welsh history had typically been treated as if the country was a minor region of England and, as such, marginalized. Noting the lack of resources and published materials in the field, he first helped to found the Association of History Teachers in Wales, after recognizing that in order to develop the discipline, Welsh education needed its own materials to

create and develop its own constitutional and national history. Secondly, and in turn, this development partly led to the establishment of a History Committee for Wales which came to have a significant political influence. Thirdly, and not too long afterwards, the Welsh History Resources Committee was established in Wales which did so much to develop the subject and its traditions. Throughout the remainder of his working career, Gareth worked tirelessly to develop and promote the traditions of the history of education as a discipline in Wales, in terms of its curriculum, teaching, research and academic standards.

After two years of classroom-based teaching, Gareth left to join a burgeoning History department at the then Cardiff College of Education, where he taught on such courses as the new BED and started to write such articles as 'Towards a theory of history teaching', which was published in *History*. Gareth developed many of his early ideas on the history of education in Wales while at Cardiff before he moved to the then Swansea College of Education, where he taught for a further three years. He then made the short journey to the Department of Education at the University College of Swansea, where he spent a considerable period of time, before later becoming professor of Education at the University of Aberystwyth. After his retirement, he became the Honorary Research Fellow at Swansea Metropolitan University, playing a key role on its Research Committee. He was also the editor or member of the Editorial Board of *The Welsh Journal of Education* for an extended period.

During his career, Gareth wrote, co-wrote or edited some twenty books, mainly on the history of Wales or, more specifically, on the history of education in Wales, many for the University of Wales Press. These included: *The Gentry and the Elizabethan State*; *Modern Wales: A Concise History*; *The People of Wales*; *Controls and Conflicts in Welsh Secondary Education*; *Which Nation's Schools?*; *The Education of a Nation*; *A History of Education in Wales*; and *Examining the Secondary Schools of Wales*. He also continued to research and write a number of scholarly articles which recently have included publications in such prestigious academic journals as the *Oxford Review of Education*, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *History of Education* and *The Welsh Journal of Education*. For his outstanding contribution to the history of education in Wales, Gareth was appointed an MBE by the Queen and Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales in 2013.

Gareth continued to be active in his life outside work and within the local community from his Southgate home. Apart from his love of

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watching cricket, he became vice chair of governors at Bishopston Comprehensive School, chair of the governing body at Pentrechwyth Primary School and an active and senior member of the board of governors of Swansea Metropolitan University, on which he became the chair of its personnel sub-committee.

Throughout his life, Gareth cared deeply and passionately about his country, his subject and related fields, his community and Welsh sport. Gareth has always been admired above all for his qualities as an academic, colleague, friend and family man. He will be sorely missed. His courage and determination to continue his professional life in adversity following his horrendous road accident, which left him having to spend the remainder of his life in a wheelchair, proved an inspiration to many people.

Gareth died peacefully after a short struggle against pneumonia, at the age of seventy-four. He leaves behind his chief supporter in his loving wife, Kath, and his son, Matthew, and daughter, Bethan, their partners and his grandchildren, Emma and Russell.

Professor Ken Reid, OBE, Former Deputy Vice Chancellor, Swansea Metropolitan University, Associate Editor and Special Editions Editor of *Educational Studies*.