

The idea of a national society of writers of Wales was conceived during the winter of 1958-9 by two writers who had met regularly to talk about Welsh literature. Following a conference in 1959 the society was set up by a group of established writers in Welsh with the name *Yr Academi Gymreig*. The adjective 'Cymreig', pertaining to Wales rather than to the language (Cymraeg), would allow the society to expand later to include writers in English, and in 1968 an English Language Section was formed.

The aims of the *Academi* are to promote literature in Wales and to assist in maintaining its standards by providing a forum for writers in both languages and encouraging contact with writers from other countries, and by the initiation of publications and public events.

Among its activities the *Academi*

- holds annual conferences, one in Welsh, one in English
- organises international conferences — so far with writers from other Celtic countries, from Yugoslavia and from Finland
- holds readings, discussions and social events
- awards prizes to living writers who are not members for books of special merit
- erects memorials to celebrated authors of the past

Among the publications of the *Academi* are:

- TALIESIN — a leading Welsh-language literary magazine
- translations into Welsh of foreign classics
- reprints in paperback of Welsh and English books which have gone out of print

Major publications in preparation are:

- a comprehensive English/Welsh dictionary
- A COMPANION TO THE LITERATURES OF WALES

The *Academi* is funded by the Welsh Arts Council and through the subscriptions of its members, and since 1978 has been constitutionally independent, being registered as a charity and having its own office and professional staff. The office is open every weekday from 9 to 5 and the staff are glad to welcome — and assist — any writer where they can do so.

Secretary: Sue Harries

The founding of the English Language Section of the *Academi* in 1968 helped to signify the emergence of a tradition of 'Anglo-Welsh' writing. Indeed, one of its leading figures, Jack Jones, became the first President of the Section, and another, Glyn Jones, its first Chairman. Even though the only funds at first available were the subscriptions of its forty-five or so members, the Section was able to organise many meetings and conferences — thanks largely to Sally Roberts Jones, who acted as Secretary/Treasurer, later assisted by Alison Bielski as Joint Secretary until their responsibilities could be taken over by professional staff. On the death of Jack Jones in 1970, A. G. Prys-Jones became President.

In 1971 the Section received its first grant from the Welsh Arts Council, allowing it to organise weekend schools at which lectures were given by such writers as Richard Hughes, Gwyn Thomas, Gwyn Williams and Glyn Jones. Over the years the Welsh Arts Council grant — and the activities of the Section — increased steadily. In 1979 a scheme of association with the Section was begun: for a small subscription Associates are sent information about the many events organised by the Section which they can attend, and other literature of interest, including a newsletter. A library of Anglo-Welsh books is being assembled in the office and it is hoped that a reading room, which members can use when they are in Cardiff, will be available.

*Academi* projects for which the Section has particular responsibility are the *Companion to the Literatures of Wales*, and the series of reprints of Anglo-Welsh books. The Editor of the *Companion* is Meic Stephens, Literature Director of the Welsh Arts Council, advised by an Editorial Board under the chairmanship of Professor Gwyn Jones, and helped by an Editorial Assistant employed by the *Academi*. It is expected that the *Companion*, which will follow broadly the Oxford University Press 'Companions' in style and format, will go to press — in Welsh and English — in 1983. In the reprint series — so urgently needed by students of Anglo-Welsh literature — five titles have already been published. It is hoped that in the next two years reprints will be published of books by Gwyn Thomas, Wyn Griffith, Gwyn Jones, Glyn Jones, Emyr Humphreys and others.

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## Past Members

In its first ten years the Section has lost seven of its distinguished members.

**JACK JONES (1884-1970)**, novelist, playwright, biographer, was an ideal choice as first President, embodying so many of the traits and experiences of the Anglo-Welsh in his own person. He was born in Merthyr Tydfil, and his early career included mining, military service, trade union work, politics and a variety of cultural activities. His first novel was published in 1934, when he was over fifty years of age, and he was to publish ten more novels, three plays, and several other books in the years that followed, all of them designed on the grand scale. In 1970, shortly before his death, he received a major award from the Welsh Arts Council for his contribution to the literature of Wales.

**BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN (1912-1971)**, was born in Bangor, and lived in North Wales for most of her life, though her visits abroad, to places as far apart as Copenhagen and the Greek Islands, were of great importance in her artistic development. She was perhaps best known as an artist, but though her books are often the result of her art, they have their own value as literature — particularly *Tide Race* (1962) which tells of her life on Bardsey Island, and is probably the most enduring of her written works. Her other books include a novel, *The Water Castle*, (1964), and a collection of poems, *The Green Heart*: (1958). It was Brenda Chamberlain who, with her then husband John Petts and Alun Lewis, was responsible for the publication of the Caseg poetry Broadsheets in the early nineteen forties.

**RHYS DAVIES (1903-1978)**, was a native of the Rhondda in South Wales, but spent much of his adult life in London; he also travelled abroad, most notably in the South of France, in 1928-9, when he became a close companion of D. H. Lawrence and his wife. He was a prolific novelist and short-story writer, and published over forty books during his career. Although Wales was always important to him he was, as one of the older generation of Anglo-Welsh writers (his first book was published in 1927), perhaps the first to combine themes from his own background with influences from a wider literary scene. In this he resembled his friend Lawrence.

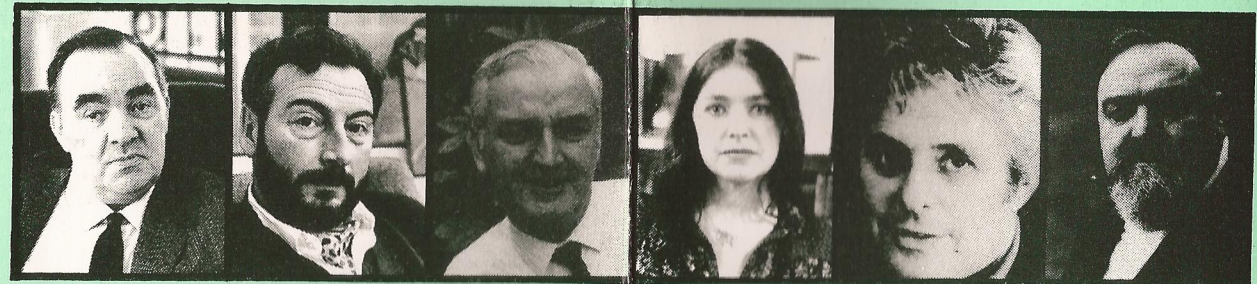
**LI. WYN GRIFFITH (1890-1978)**, was born in Dolgellau, in an environment that was Welsh in every possible sense. His later career as a Civil Servant took him outside Wales, but with the possible exception of *'Up to Mametz'*, the story of his experience while serving with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the First World War, all his books contain strong Welsh elements, in theme or setting. However, like many of the earlier Anglo-Welsh writers, he wrote out of Wales, but for Britain, and his honours too were British — the C.B.E., the Vice-Chairmanship of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1952-61). At least two of his books, *The Welsh and Spring of Youth* are 'explanations' of his own country for others (he also published novels and verse). His age prevented him from playing an active part in the early years of the English Language Section, but its officers and members were always aware of his support and encouragement.

**DANNIE ABSE** Poet  
**JOHN ACKERMAN** Poet and critic  
**SAM ADAMS** Poet and editor (Vice-Chairman)  
**GRAHAM ALLEN** Poet  
**RUTH BIDGOOD** Poet  
**ALISON P. BIELSKI** Poet  
**WALTER H. BOORE** Novelist and poet  
**GERARD CASEY** Poet  
**JOSEPH CLANCY** Verse translator  
**GILLIAN CLARKE** Poet and editor  
**ANTHONY CONRAN** Poet and publisher  
**TONY CURTIS** Poet and publisher  
**TUDOR DAVID** Novelist  
**JOHN DAVIES** Poet  
**WALFORD DAVIES** Critic  
**WALTER HAYDN DAVIES** Prosewriter  
**JON DRESSLE** Poet  
**TOM EARLEY** Poet  
**GEORGE EWART EVANS** Prose and short-storywriter  
**STUART EVANS** Novelist and poet  
**PETER FINCH** Poet and editor (Treasurer)  
**RAYMOND GARLICK** Poet  
**PETER GRUFFYDD** Poet

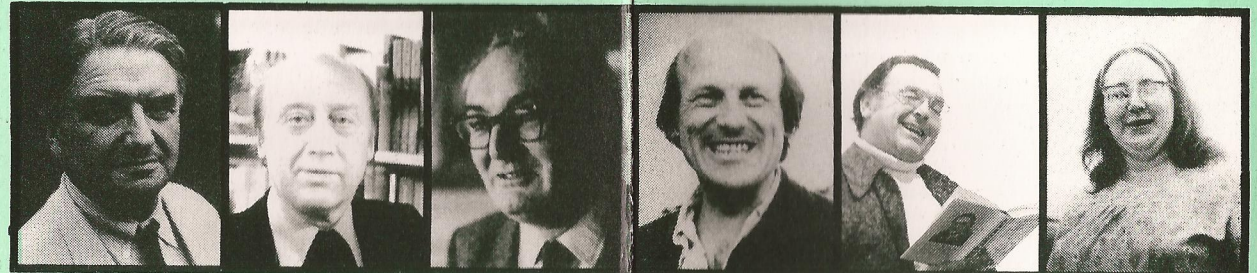
## Present Members

**JAMES HANLEY** Novelist  
**DESIRÉE HIRST** Critic  
**JEREMY HOOKER** Poet and critic  
**BELINDA HUMFREY** Critic  
**NIGEL JENKINS** Poet and publisher  
**RANDAL JENKINS** Editor and critic  
**A. G. PRYS JONES** Poet and prosewriter (President)  
**DON DALE JONES** Editor and critic  
**G. O. JONES** Novelist (Chairman)  
**GLYN JONES** Poet and novelist, short-storywriter and essayist (Vice-President and past Chairman)  
**GWYN JONES** Novelist and short-storywriter  
**SALLY ROBERTS JONES** Poet, publisher and bibliographer (past Secretary)  
**PETER ELFED LEWIS** Poet and critic  
**ROLAND MATHIAS** Poet and critic (past Chairman)  
**BILL MEILEN** Novelist and playwright  
**ROBERT MINHINICK** Poet  
**ALISON M. MORGAN** Children's author  
**ELAINE N. MORGAN** Prose and scriptwriter  
**ROBERT MORGAN** Poet  
**BRIAN MORRIS** Poet  
**JAN MORRIS** Prosewriter

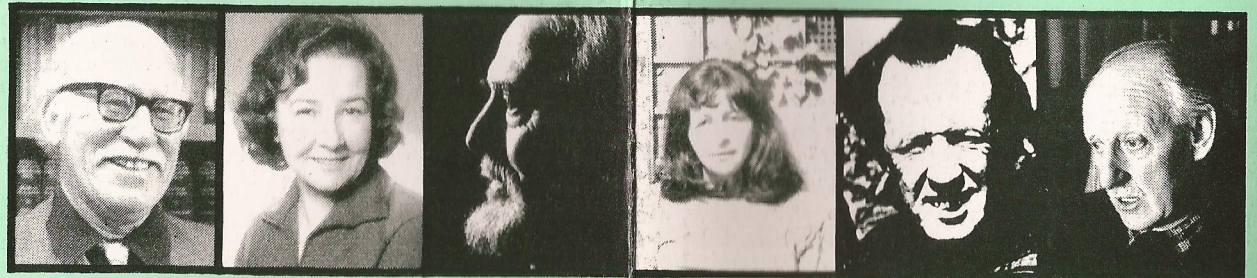
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**JOHN ORMOND** Poet  
**DANIEL PARRY-JONES** Prosewriter  
**ALAN PERRY** Poet  
**DOUGLAS PHILLIPS** Poet  
**JOHN POOK** Poet  
**CECIL PRICE** Prosewriter  
**SHEENAGH PUGH** Poet  
**ALUN RICHARDS** Novelist, short-story and scriptwriter  
**BERNICE RUBENS** Novelist  
**MEIC STEPHENS** Poet and editor  
**GWYN THOMAS** Novelist and short-storywriter  
**NED THOMAS** Prosewriter and critic  
**R. GEORGE THOMAS** Critic and biographer  
**JOHN TRIPP** Poet and editor  
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**J. P. WARD** Poet and editor  
**HARRI WEBB** Poet  
**GWYN WILLIAMS** Poet, novelist, translator and prosewriter  
**GWYN A. WILLIAMS** Historian and biographer  
**IOAN M. WILLIAMS** Critic and biographer  
**RAYMOND WILLIAMS** Novelist and critic  
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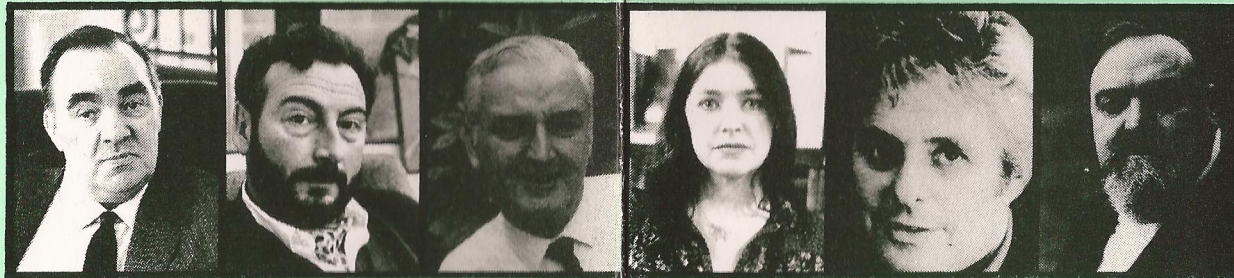


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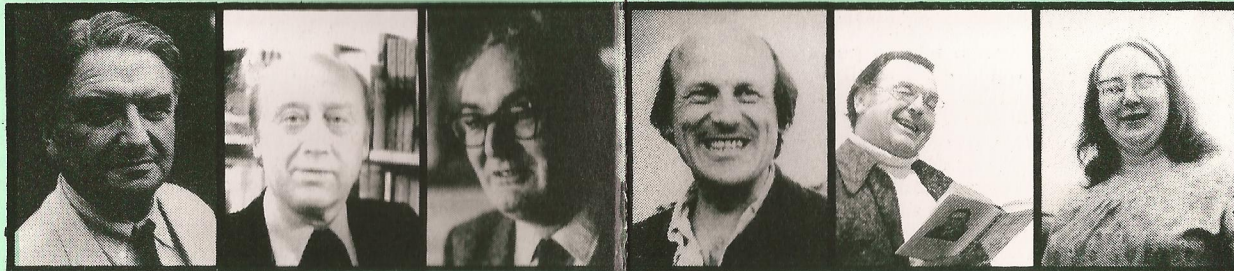
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**CYRIL HODGES (1915-1974)**, came from a non-Welsh family, but was effectively 'naturalised' by his upbringing in South Wales, and in due course began to study early Welsh poetry in translation. This interest soon led him to the study of the Welsh language and of things Welsh, and he became an active and convinced member of Plaid Cymru. He began writing in 1939, but his most prolific period was probably also the period that produced his most enduring poems. By profession Cyril Hodges was an industrialist, and a successful one — a success which he used to encourage and support all sorts of ventures, from *Poetry Wales* to the work of the English Language Section of the *Academi*. His confidence in the value of the Section's efforts was as sustaining as his generous supplements to his annual subscription in the early years.

**CLEDWYN HUGHES (1920-1977)**, was born in Montgomeryshire, but lived, for the latter part of his life, at Arthog in Merionethshire. He was a chemist by training, but from 1947, when his first novel was published, he was also to all intents and purposes a professional writer. Between 1947 and 1950 he published five novels and some nine short stories (never collected). The early fifties were in many ways a discouraging era in Anglo-Welsh writing, and he soon turned to Welsh history and topography as themes, producing a series of 'travel' books that were as fascinating and delightful as they were unusual.

**RICHARD HUGHES (1900-1976)**, was born in Weybridge, Surrey, of a family which, though Welsh in origin, had left Wales three centuries before. At an early age he decided to return, and as soon as he could afford it, he rented a cottage near Harlech, an area in which he lived, on and off, for the rest of his life. Despite this attachment to Wales, Richard Hughes lived also in the wider world to which his family and educational background gave him *entrée*, and his work won critical acclaim in London and elsewhere. Indeed, though Wales is present in almost everything he wrote, he is a writer who is never in any sense either provincial or regional. His career began with a relatively prolific period when he published poems, plays, short stories and his first novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929), but in later years he became a much more sparing writer, producing only two novels and a volume of war history in thirty years. In 1973 he took part in the English Language Section's weekend conference on the Anglo-Welsh novel, at which he was both the principal speaker and a valued participant.



Delegates at the Taliesin conference 1969 "Literature in Celtic Countries".

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Copies of the Reprint Series are available from the Academi offices.