

# **John Owen Jenkins (1856 - 1944)**

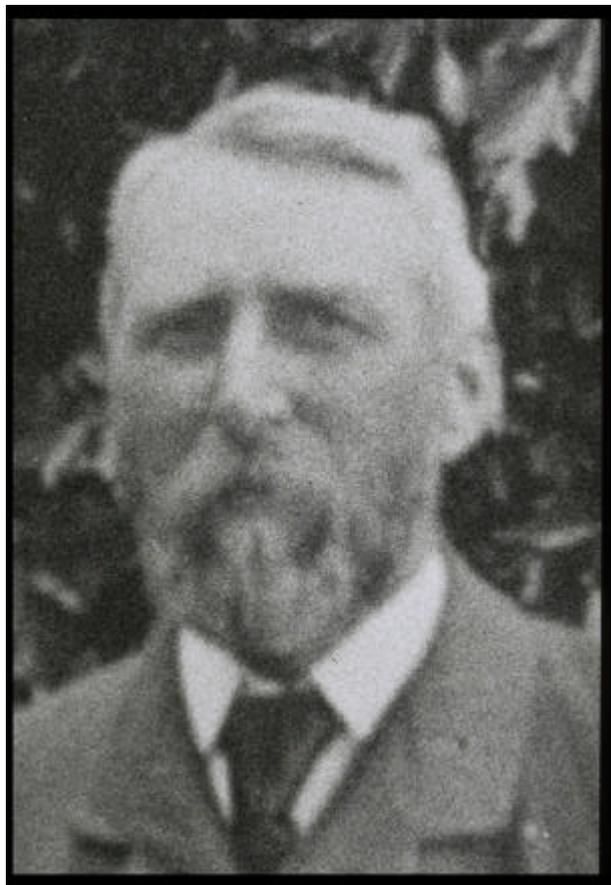
Quaker Evangelist and a  
Recorded Minister

Clerk and Leader at 'The Pales'  
for nearly 60 years

*"The Kingdom of God must always  
come first in my life"*

**John Owen Jenkins**

**(1856 - 1944)**



## John Owen Jenkins and the Pales

No history of the Pales could be complete without mention of the wonderful work carried on there by John Owen Jenkins. He was educated at the Pales by William Knowles, whose influence remained with him for the whole of his life; later he was one of Yardley Warner's closest associates during his time at the Pales.

His father died when he was 8 years old. His mother, an old scholar of the Quaker school at Sidcot, was disowned for 'marrying out' (marrying a non-Quaker). He was converted when he was 23, in 1879, at one of the Quaker 'tent' meetings held on the Common at Penybont, after which he never turned back.

He joined the Society of Friends in 1879, and devoted his long life - he died aged 88 years - to religious work, especially at the Pales, where he was clerk and leader for about 60 years.

After Anne Warner's days (1889), Benjamin Elsmere was, for one year, a Home Mission Worker at Pales, and then, after him, Thomas Wield. But Friends could no longer afford to keep a worker at Pales, so John Owen Jenkins shouldered the work 'for the love of it'. Friends from Leominster and the Quarterly Meeting took an interest in this gifted young man, and at 30 he was made a recorded minister. Undoubtedly he had a great power behind him, or he could never have accomplished what he did. He used to say "A shepherd must look after his flock".

His work at the Pales was so blessed and fruitful that extra room for the overflowing Sunday School had to be sought at the Iron Room, Penybont; later, John Owen Jenkins gave land for Greenfield Meeting House to be built.

He would ride to Pales for a morning Sunday School and Adult School, followed by a Meeting for Worship; in the afternoon he would lead a meeting at a farmhouse 7 miles away, and then back for a meeting at the second Meeting House at Greenfield, where there was also a well-attended Sunday School, a Meeting for Worship, and weekday meetings, both full to capacity for every service. Although he had seven children and farms to care for he rode in all weathers to and fro on horseback across the Common, to the Pales and to the various farmhouses scattered around the countryside - a distance equivalent to the circumference of the globe, about 25,000 miles!

Henry Stanley Newman had said, "John, I believe there is work for you to do at the Pales." How right he was! John Owen Jenkins loved the Pales, his heart was wholly in his work. He maintained that the Kingdom of God must come first in his life. His favourite saying was "In all thy ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths". God blessed his great work and it was wonderfully fruitful. One Friend said that his "long and fruitful service was unique. Few men have given greater

service to the Society of Friends. In God's good time and way I feel sure it will continue and spring up again with renewed vigour, and prosper." May this prophecy come true.

John Owen Jenkins visited the poor and sick in the neighbourhood, and was in great demand for work elsewhere. Apart from his work at The Pales and Greenfield, he was an ardent revivalist and often felt that the Society had lost its early enthusiasm. Along with Alfred Wright, he was the means of reviving the work at Almeley, and as a result Almeley Meeting House was re-opened, and later a new Meeting House built at Woonton..

John Owen Jenkins was among the principal starters of the meetings at Llandrindod Wells (1892) and Llanyre (1893). Also in 1892 he, along with H. S. Newman, William Henry Wilson, William Haslam and others, co-operated in the establishment of a Convention for the deepening of spiritual life in Llandrindod Wells. 'Under minute', he held missions at Swansea, Cardiff, Woburn Sands, Milford Haven, Gloucester and other places. On one occasion he travelled in the ministry in South Wales with Rachel B. Braithwaite and Max Reich. At the time of the Welsh Revival 1904-5 meetings were held at Leominster under his leadership

His zeal for Christ never waned and he was filled with grief when, owing to an accident, and later, increasing infirmity, he had to relinquish some of the service he had wholeheartedly carried on for Friends and other causes.

John Owen Jenkins public life was, as he said, "part of his religion". In 1894 he was made J.P. for Radnorshire and was Chairman of the Llandrindod Wells and Penybont Bench of Magistrates for about 20 years. One newspaper editor wrote "In this capacity he has always carried out his duties in a very efficient manner, but is ever ready to temper justice with mercy, and by his helpful words to seek to start erring men on the right paths again." He was also a County Councillor, a Parish Councillor, Chairman of the local School Managers; he served on the Court of Governors of the University of Wales, and on the first joint Education and Agricultural Committees; he was President of the Radnorshire Agricultural Show. He served on the Quaker Meetings for Sufferings and many other Quaker committees - as well as looking after his farms and providing for his seven children! Temperance, Peace, and Liberalism always found him an active and loyal supporter.

In all his work John Owen Jenkins had the help of his wife (nee Florence Mary Fisher), a dynamic personality and 'full of Spirit', and with her Quaker upbringing and background, a great asset. She was educated at Ackworth and The Mount, was gifted in the ministry, cared for her seven children, was on the Radnorshire Education and Agricultural Committees, and for many years, was President of the Penybont Women's Institute. She also gave hospitality to numerous Friends in connection with the work, including missionaries and travelling Friends from

America, and other overseas visitors who were taken by John Owen Jenkins to the Pales.

The meetings held at the Pales and Greenfield at this time were witnessed to as being "marvellous and powerful", and we can only add our prayer that this wonderful example of self-sacrifice on the part of John Owen Jenkins and his wife Florence Mary (died 1950) shall, in God's good time work once again at the Pales, where, as seen from the visitors' book, people still come from far and near to visit this now world famous Quaker Meeting House.

Written by Florence Jenkins, daughter.

Edited and printed by Martin Williams, November 1992

Below is a transcript of the pledge written by John Owen Jenkins, at the age of 77

I promise through Divine Assistance and God's Grace that I will devote my life entirely to the service of God, in season and out of season, in living to promote a spiritual awakening in this neighborhood, and throughout the world, by all the means in my power, especially by much prayer, and testimony on all occasions when it is needed; and to equip myself for the very best service I can, render to my Lord and Master, and to love others as Christ has loved us, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that his power may fall on me, and further I will say with Jacob of old I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me, and give the blessing through me to others.

To which I subscribe my name, this the 21st day of June 1933.

John Owen Jenkins