

OBITUARY

Tom Jones Hughes (1922–2011)

Tom Jones Hughes (he never permitted a hyphen between Jones and Hughes), who died in December 2011, was a formative influence in the development of geography in Ireland.

Born in Welsh-speaking Eifionydd in Caernarvonshire, he began his studies in geography, history and economics at University College Aberystwyth in 1941. Following a wartime interlude during which he was, as a pacifist, posted to work in prisoner of war camps in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, he returned to Aberystwyth to earn a first-class honours BA degree in geography in 1947, followed in 1950 by a master's degree from the University of Wales and a teaching diploma. He was appointed assistant in geography at University College Dublin (UCD) in the same year. Geography in those days was in commerce and was very much seen as being about 'commercial geography'. For 10 years, he was the sole geographer in UCD, until the appointment of Dr Tony Orme in 1960, when an honours degree programme in geography was initiated and Jones Hughes was made professor of geography. The department expanded quickly with a number of significant appointments in physical and human geography. Under his leadership a significant and distinctive postgraduate school in historical geography was developed in UCD. He was an excellent lecturer and spoke extempore, relying only on the merest of notes jotted on an index card. He had a deep and passionate understanding of his field and his enthusiasm inspired many that listened to him as students. Many of his graduates in turn became influential academics and public servants. His influence, however, extended beyond that institution.

From his arrival in Ireland in 1950, he became actively involved in the wider geographical community through the Geographical Society of Ireland (GSI), initially by attending field trips and talks, then by delivering addresses to the society and leading field trips. These field trips, especially in his latter years, were great occasions and highly prized by those lucky enough to get a seat on the bus. He served on the committee of the society from 1952 and was its honorary president from 1958 to 1960. He became editor of *Irish Geography* in 1960, a position he held for eight years. These were difficult years for the journal, money was always scarce, but the quality of those issues has stood to the present day.

He was also heavily involved with the development of geography at second level. In March 1962, Tom Jones Hughes chaired the meeting of geography teachers at which the Association of Geography Teachers of Ireland (AGTI) was formally constituted. He was its first president and contributed the lead article to the first *Journal* of the Association.

Tom Jones Hughes made a vital contribution to the development of geography as a discipline in Ireland and to its key organisations – the GSI, AGTI and the Royal Irish Academy's (RIA) National Committee for Geography. For a compilation of his research, readers are directed to *Landholding, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth-century Ireland* (2010), which was reviewed in volume 45, issue 2. It is fitting that the Society acknowledges his sterling contribution, not least as a former president and as editor of this journal.