Sir John Rhŷs (1840-1915) was the son of a farmer and lead miner, but managed to get an education which led him to study at Bangor Normal College, and become Headmaster of the British School at Rhos-y-Bol, Anglesey, in 1861. In 1865, however, his career took a different turn when, after meeting Charles Williams, the then Principal of Jesus, he matriculated at Oxford from Jesus College, getting a First in Literae Humaniores in 1869. He was elected a Fellow of Merton College, and travelled extensively on the continent.

Rhŷs became an inspector of schools in 1871, but simultaneously researched Welsh philology, winning such a reputation that in 1877 he was elected the first Professor of Celtic at Oxford. He became an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College in that year, and then Official Fellow and Bursar there in 1881. In 1895 he was elected Principal to succeed Hugo Harper.

As Principal, Rhŷs was undoubtedly one of the most significant heads of Jesus College of any age, not least thanks to his scholarly reputation. He retained close links with Wales, and served on many important commissions. He was knighted in 1907 and made a member of the privy council in 1911, as well as receiving several honorary degrees. Rhŷs died in the Lodgings of Jesus College in December 1915.

Almost all of Sir John Rhŷs’s papers are now held in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. However, the Bodleian Library holds papers of Rhŷs’s daughters, Mifanwy and Olwen, which include diaries kept by Mifanwy for 1893-1945 and by Olwen for 1897-1927, both of which cover the period when their father was Principal. The papers have the references MSS Eng. Misc. d. 740, e. 674-701, and g. 97, and MSS Eng. lett. c. 314, d. 337 and e. 131 (see further M. Clapinson and T.D. Rogers, Summary Catalogue of Post-Medieval Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford. Acquisitions 1916-1975 (2 vols, Oxford, 1991), i, nos. 45544-76).

On the other hand, there is very little relating to Rhŷs or his family here at Jesus College, apart from this letter from David Lloyd George, and a collection of press cuttings, which may or may not have been assembled by Rhŷs and his family. These cuttings were found in the Library of Jesus College, and transferred to the Archives in June 2017 as Accession No. 419.

Catalogued in January 2020.

### JC:PR23/C1 - CORRESPONDENCE

22 Jun 1910

Letter (typed with signature) from David Lloyd George (address, 11 Downing Street), to Sir John Rhŷs. Lloyd George thanks Rhŷs and the Fellows for electing him an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College.

### JC:PR23/N1 – NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS AND OFFPRINTS

1865

Offprint from the Transactions of the Philological Society containing a paper by Rhŷs, “The Passive Verbs of the Latin and the Celtic Languages”, which was published in 1865.
JESUS COLLEGE OXFORD

JC:PR23   PAPERS OF SIR JOHN RHYS (F. 1877-95; PR. 1895-1915)

JC:PR23/N1/2   1880
Proof copy of part of Y Traethodydd 35 (1880), its pages uncut, which includes an article (in Welsh) by John Rhŷs, “Chwedloniaeth Gymreig” [i.e. “Welsh Myth”], on pp. 476-84. At the head of the article is a note that this was delivered by Rhŷs at the Carnarvon Eisteddfod on 24 August 1880. A note has been added in pencil that this piece was reprinted from Y Geredl Gymreig, 2 September 1880.

JC:PR23/N1/3   July 1889
Copy of issue of Y Geninen, its pages uncut, which includes on pages 129-138 an article (in Welsh) by John Rhŷs, “Cymreig yr oes Hon” [“Welsh of this Age”].

JC:PR23/N1/4   1891
Part of an offprint from the Transactions of the Philological Society containing most of a paper by Rhŷs, “The Celts and the other Aryans of the P Group”.

JC:PR23/N1/5   Aug 1895
Cutting from a Welsh newspaper, Yr Brython Cymreig, containing a report of an Eisteddfod at New Quay (Ceinewydd) at which Rhŷs gave a speech.

JC:PR23/N1/6   Aug 1895
Cutting from the South Wales Daily News, also reporting (this time in English) on the speech given at the New Quay Eisteddfod by Rhŷs.

JC:PR23/N1/7   after 29 May 1897
Offprint from an issue of The Pembroke County Guardian for 29 May 1897, which comprises a letter from Rhŷs titled “The Ancient Names of Haverford.”

JC:PR23/N1/8   1898
Incomplete leaflet which appears to be a guide to excursions for the Irish Society of Antiquaries to take place in August 1898. It includes articles on the places which they are to visit, one of which, on the Breastagh Ogam Stone, is by Rhŷs. Only a page and a half of his article is preserved.

JC:PR23/N1/9   31 Mar 1900
Cutting from the Pembroke County Guardian, which reprints a speech given by Rhŷs about St. David, preceded by an explanatory letter from Rhŷs. It seems that his conclusions about the origins of the saint caused some controversy.

JC:PR23/N1/10   1903
Offprint from the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries for 26 March 1903, giving the text of a paper read by Rhŷs on an inscribed stone found at Llsytyn Gwyne, Caernarvonshire.

JC:PR23/N1/11   n.d. (c. 1900?)
Cutting from an unnamed newspaper of an article “An Appeal to Welshmen”, which discusses Rhŷs.
Two copies of *The Welsh Leader* Vol. I no. 25, which contains an article about Rhŷs as part of a series, “Welsh Leaders of To-Day.”

Copy of *The Welsh Outlook*, Vol. III no. 25, which contains two obituaries of Rhŷs.