

## HOWELL, JAMES (1594? - 1666), author

**Name:** James Howell  
**Date of birth:** 1594?  
**Date of death:** 1666  
**Parent:** Thomas Howell  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** author  
**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Herbert Gladstone Wright

Second son of Thomas Howell, curate of Llangamarch, Brecknock, and later rector of Cynwil and Aber-nant, Carmarthenshire. Educated at Hereford Free School, James Howell entered Jesus College Oxford in 1610 and graduated in 1613. He took up a business career and after 1616 travelled on the Continent for some years. The knowledge of foreign languages that he acquired during this period and on a tour in France in 1622 led to his being used on diplomatic errands. From 1622 to 1624 he was on a mission in Spain and Sardinia, and in 1632 he was at the Danish court, where his command of Latin proved useful. In 1627 he was elected as M.P. for Richmond, Yorkshire. After 1639 he acted as a secret agent for Strafford, the lord deputy of Ireland, and consequently, in 1643, the Commons put him in the Fleet, where he remained a prisoner till 1651. In 1661 he was made historiographer royal as a reward for his support of Charles I. He was buried in the Temple church 3 November 1666. A monument erected to him was badly damaged during an air raid on May 10/11 1941, but most of the inscription on the tablet on the east wall is still legible.

Howell was acquainted with such eminent writers and thinkers as **Edward, lord Herbert of Cherbury** and Ben Jonson. On Jonson's death in 1637 he wrote a tribute in the form of an elegy. His political allegory, *Dodona's Grove*, was translated into French and Latin, and *England's Teares*, an appeal for peace in 1644, was rendered into Latin and Dutch. In his political pamphlets he espoused the king's cause while he lived, but when Cromwell was made Protector, Howell praised him for dissolving the Long Parliament. Moving with the times, Howell laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency.

A gifted linguist, Howell compiled an English - French - Italian - Spanish dictionary, as well as a collection of proverbs derived from these languages and from Welsh. Fully conversant with Welsh, he never loses an opportunity to quote from his native tongue and to refer to what he considered the racial and linguistic affinities of his people.

As a writer he is now chiefly remembered for his *Familiar Epistles*. Into them Howell pours all his knowledge of men and affairs and his insatiable curiosity in many fields. Their liveliness has combined with their natural style to win for them a lasting popularity.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Herbert Gladstone Wright**, (1888 - 1962)

### Sources

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

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W. H. Vann, *Notes on the Writings of James Howell* (Texas 1924)

*Transactions of the Liverpool Welsh National Society*, 1902-3

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*The Welsh Outlook*, 1920, vii, 1928, xv

and see under James Owen

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [James Howell](#)

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