

JAMES, JOHN (1779 - 1864), the first Unitarian minister in Cardiganshire, and schoolmaster

Name: John James
Date of birth: 1779
Date of death: 1864
Gender: Male
Occupation: the first Unitarian minister in Cardiganshire, and schoolmaster
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Author: Thomas Oswald Williams

Born on Ash Wednesday 1779 at Glynderi, Rhydybenne, Llangeler, Carmarthenshire. His name is entered in the list of subscribers to *Telyn Dewi* as one of **Davis** Castell-hywel's pupils. In 1802 he sought admission to Carmarthen Academy but was refused because (or so he thought) he was a Unitarian. The same year he was, however, admitted to Exeter Academy under Kenrick and Bretland. After a stay there of only eighteen months he left with the intention of going to York Academy, **Charles Lloyd** however, persuaded him to accept a call from the young Unitarian churches of Cardiganshire. In 1803-4 he began his life's work by opening a school at Ystrad. In August 1814, having received a call from Gellionnen, he promised to look after its needs and preach there once a month. Early in 1815 he received a call from Bridgend and Betws, where he stayed from 26 May 1816 until 26 May 1818 (holding occasional services until 22 November 1818). He then gave up Bridgend and devoted himself entirely to Gellionnen. He was a successful schoolmaster and a fluent preacher. He is said to have been disappointed because he was not given a tutorship at Carmarthen, and to have considered opening a specifically Unitarian academy at Neath with **David Davis** (1778 - 1846) but nothing came of this plan. He translated into Welsh Dr. Priestley's catechism, 1805; and two dissertations, the first on the words *Redemption, Ransom, Purchase ...* and the second on *Words used in the New Testament in relation to Sacrifices*, 1807. In 1808-11 he published *Ymfyniad am Sylfaen yr Athrawiaeth o Haeddiant Crist* in four volumes. In 1824 he published a translation, *Ymfyniad tawel i'r Athrawiaeth Ysgrythurol am Berson Crist*, of a work by Thomas Belsham. He died 1 September 1864 at the age of 85 and was buried in Pantydefaid cemetery.

Author

Reverend Thomas Oswald Williams, (1888 - 1965)

Sources

Yr Ymfynnydd, 1864 (244), 1895 (49), 1890, 1891, 1892, 1897 - a series of articles by T.T.

Yr Ymfynnydd, August 1938, 124-5 August 1942, 118-23

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Published date: 1959

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