

LEWIS, JOHN (died 1616?), of Llynwene, Llanfihangel Nant Melan, Radnorshire, barrister, and author of *The History of Britain*

Name: John Lewis
Date of death: 1616?
Spouse: Ann Lewis (née Sais)
Parent: Sybil ferch Roger ap Watcyn Fychan
Parent: Hugh Lewis
Gender: Male
Occupation: barrister, and author of *The History of Britain*
Home: Llynwene
Area of activity: History and Culture; Law; Literature and Writing
Author: William Llewelyn Davies

Born in the parish of Pencraig (Old Radnor), son of Hugh Lewis and Sibyl, daughter of **Roger ap Watcyn Fychan**, Hergest. **W. Rowlands** (*Llyfryddiaeth*, see under 1729) connects him, in error, with Maenor Owen, Pembrokeshire, and describes him as a great-grandfather of **Richard Fenton**, the Pembrokeshire historian. It is unlikely that he is the John Lewis who entered Lincoln's Inn, 28 February 1562-3 (*Lincoln's Inn Admissions*) and called to the Bar after 4 June 1570 (*Black Book of Lincoln's Inn*). It is more probable that he is the person who entered the Inner Temple, 20 August 1568. There is no certainty when he was called to the Bar.

Peniarth MS 252 , which is a collection of papers which belonged to him, the greater part being in his hand, shows that Lewis was acquainted with **Dr. John David Rhys** and **John Dee**. Part of the MS. consists of portions of John Lewis's own work, *The History of Great Britain ...* which however, did not appear until over a century after the author's death, viz. in 1729, in which year it was published (in London) under the title of *The History of Great Britain, ... 'till the Death of Cadwalader, Last King of the Britains; and of the Kings of Scotland to Eugene V. As also A Short Account of the Kings, Dukes, and Earls of Bretagne, 'till that Dukedom was united to the Crown of France ... By John Lewis, Esq.; Barrester at Law. Now first published from his Original Manuscript To which is added, The Breviary of Britayne, written in Latin by Humfrey Lhuyd, of Denbigh ... and lately Englished by Thomas Twine.* ... The book was no doubt written to defend the traditional history of Wales against such critics as Polydore Vergil, to correct some statements made by Camden, and to vindicate **Geoffrey of Monmouth**. The work was edited by **Hugh Thomas**, the Brecknock genealogist and historian, who made some 'Additions' to the original work; **Thomas** probably used B.M. Harl. MS. 4872 and not **Peniarth MS 252** . B.M. Harl. MS. 6870 has the quarterings of John Lewis 'of Lhuywneny,' co. Radnor. The following extract (quoted by **Edward Owen** in his *Catalogue*, named below) from the copy (in B.M. Harl. MS. 6840) of the will (dated 14 September 1720) of **Hugh Thomas** is relevant: 'Whereas I have receiv'd several pounds towards printing my book now in ye press and begun by Mr. John Lewis of Llanwenny ...'

Like other members of his family, he was a Catholic recusant, and he was excommunicated by the Bishop of St. David's (*Exch. Proc.*, 151/34/8, Jas. 1).

John Lewis died at some time between 14 February 1614-5, when he dated his will, and 12 February 1615-6, when it was proved.

In addition to **Peniarth MS 252** , John Lewis owned **Peniarth MS 54 i** , **Peniarth MS 55** **Peniarth MS 60** , **Peniarth MS 67** and **Peniarth MS 79** . (See also B.M. Add. MS. 6921.)

Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

Sources

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The National Library of Wales Journal, i, 42-3

note by Egerton Phillimore in *Y Cymmrodor*, vii, 106-7

Edward Owen, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts relating to Wales in the British Museum* (1900â€“22) (consult indexes)

F. G. Payne in *Y Llenor: cylchgrawn chwarterol dan nawdd cymdeithasau Cymraeg y colegau cenedlaethol*, 1935, 165-89

Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society, i, 82

Theophilus Jones, Edwin Davies, Joseph Russell Bailey, *History of the County of Brecknock* (1909-1930), i, 50

Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1870, 74-5, 86

NLW MS 174E

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T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity, etc.* (London 1950), 1950

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