

LLEWELLYN, THOMAS (1720? - 1783), Baptist minister and tutor

Name: Thomas Llewellyn
Date of birth: 1720?
Date of death: 1783
Spouse: Mary Llewellyn
Parent: Anne Lewis Jenkin (née James)
Parent: Evan Llewellyn
Parent: Lewelin Jenkin
Gender: Male
Occupation: Baptist minister and tutor
Area of activity: Education; Religion
Authors: Benjamin George Owens, Brynley Francis Roberts

Born at Penalltau-isaf, Gelligaer, c. 1720, son of Evan Llewellyn and descended, it is said, from **Tomas Llywelyn** of Rhigos. After following the trade of tailor in the Castleton district, he was baptized in 1738, and underwent a course of training for the Baptist ministry, first at Trosnant (Pontypool) in 1740, then at Bristol in 1741, and finally in London in 1742, but although he was ordained at Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields, c. 1747, he did not undertake pastoral charge, but spent the greater part of his life, until the early 70s, as tutor at an academy for poor Baptist ministerial students, founded by himself in London. He died on 7 August 1783 at Castleton, where he had spent some years of retirement, and was buried in Bunhill Fields. He received the degrees of M.A. and LL.D. of the University of Aberdeen.

He is best remembered for his efforts to secure for his fellow-countrymen a constant supply and distribution of Welsh Bibles. He published *Historical Account of the British or Welsh Versions and Editions of the Bible*, 1768, translated into Welsh in *Seren Gomer*, 1815, and *Historical and Critical Remarks on the British Tongue*, 1769 (both reprinted together in 1793 under the title of *Tracts, Historical and Critical*) which inspired the S.P.C.K. to publish 20,000 copies (8,000 more than originally intended) of the *Welsh Bible* of 1769, and with the same object in view he joined the 'Book Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor' on 2 March 1768, and prepared for them a list of congregations of all denominations in South Wales and Monmouthshire, to whom free copies of the new *Bible* might be sent. It was also largely as the result of his initiative, coupled with monetary assistance from the Baptist fund, that the Welsh Baptist mission to North Wales was launched in 1776. He was a member of the Cymmrodorion in 1778.

His will, proved 21 August 1783, refers to his wife, Mary, who was his executrix, his brothers Evan and Jenkin, his sister Mary Thomas of Castleton, and several nephews and nieces.

There is now new information on the parentage and family of Dr Thomas Llewellyn.

It appears from the **will of Lewelin Jenkin** of Gelligaer parish (buried 30 December 1729) that Thomas Llewellyn and Mary were his children by his second wife Anne Lewis James. She died while Thomas was under 10 years of age as a guardian, James Lewis, had been appointed. Lewelin's first wife, Catherine, who died and was buried 12 February 1716/1717, was probably the mother of his sons Jenkin and Evan, half brothers, therefore, to Thomas and Mary. Lewelin married again and his third wife Elizabeth Jenkins is named in his will. Anne Lewis James's parents were probably Lewis James and Elizabeth Rosser of Eglwys llan. Their son and heir was James Lewis, perhaps the guardian of his nephew Thomas. Elizabeth Rosser inherited Cefn Hengoed farm and granted a lease to build Hengoed Baptist chapel. Her grandson Lewis James was minister there in the 18th century and he was probably Dr Thomas Llewellyn's cousin.

Authors

Benjamin George Owens

Dr Brynley Francis Roberts

Sources

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See the discussion by Greg Buick in *Gelligaer Historical Society Journal*, 19 (2012)

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