

THOMAS, HUGH (1673 - 1720), herald and antiquary

Name: Hugh Thomas
Date of birth: 1673
Date of death: 1720
Spouse: Margaret Thomas (née Wood)
Parent: Petronilla Thomas (née Brand)
Parent: William Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: herald and antiquary
Area of activity: History and Culture; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

son of William Thomas, merchant, of London, by Petronilla his wife, daughter of William Brand of Lincoln's Inn. He was born 30 June 1673 in Fetter Lane, and christened 1 July in S. Dunstons-in-the-West, and was descended from an old family (Roman Catholic, it is said) of Llanfrynach, near Brecon, but his grandfather, Roger Thomas, had sold the ancestral home. His ancestor, Thomas ap John (died 1616 - his tombstone is in Llanfrynach church), had written the history of Brecknock and the manuscript was in the possession of Hugh Thomas. This Thomas ap John's ancestry could be traced back another five generations to Hywel Gam (**Theophilus Jones**, *History of the County of Brecknock*, 3rd edn., iv, 39). Unfortunately, we know very little about Hugh Thomas himself. He must have become interested in antiquarian research at an early age. About 1698 he wrote a dissertation on the history of Brecknock (the manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library, while a copy, probably incomplete, is in the National Library of Wales - **NLW MS 777B**) which was used and quoted from by **Theophilus Jones**; he also compiled a large collection of genealogies (also used to some extent by **Theophilus Jones**) which is now among the Harleian manuscripts in the British Museum; see **Edward Owen**, *Cat. of Welsh MSS. in the British Museum*, ii (full index). Other papers in the same collection include letters addressed to him by **Edward Lhuuyd**, **William Lewes** of Llwynderw, and other antiquaries.

By 1703 he had become deputy to Garter King-at-arms, and it appears from a letter sent to him (1710-11) by **William Lewes** that he had the sole right of registering Welsh genealogies apart from those relating to the counties of Cardigan and Radnor. He had intended to publish the *Historic of Great Britain ... 'til the Death of Cadwaladr*, written by **John Lewis** of Llynwene, with some additions of his own, but this did not appear until 1729 (see **Francis Payne**'s article in *Y Llenor*, October 1935). The Golden Grove Book of Pedigrees, now in the P.R.O., is based on the work of Hugh Thomas and **William Lewes**.

Hugh Thomas lived in Bloomsbury. He died 22 September 1720, and was buried in S. Martin-in-the-fields; his will is dated 14 September 1720 (**Edward Owen**, op. cit., ii, 491) and was proved 6 October (*Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, xv, 60). (The dates 1715 and 1721 given in various editions of **Theophilus Jones** and in other books are, of course, incorrect.) As he had no children, his widow Margaret, daughter of George Wood of Abergavenny, was the sole beneficiary under the will, apart from certain legacies. His collection of pedigrees and other manuscripts was left to **Robert Harley**, earl of Oxford, and so, ultimately, came to the British Museum. He had a brother who, according to the will, was heavily in his debt and had been a burden to him all his life; yet he left him ten pounds. But, according to **Theophilus Jones**, **Harley** gave this brother a substantial sum of money, 'as he was very poor,' by way of thank-offering for the manuscripts. Two of Hugh Thomas's kinswomen (one of whom, at least, was probably his sister) lived at Brecon.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Theophilus Jones, Edwin Davies, Joseph Russell Bailey, *History of the County of Brecknock* (1909-1930), f.n. in i, 30

Gwenllian E. F. Morgan, in *Theophilus Jones, F.S.A. historian his life, letters & literary remains* (Australia 1905), 12-15

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1948, 421-7

The National Library of Wales Journal, ix, no.3, 377

and other references given above

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