

THOMAS, Sir DANIEL (LLEUFER) (1863 - 1940), stipendiary magistrate

Name: Daniel (Lleufer) Thomas
Date of birth: 1863
Date of death: 1940
Spouse: Mary Thomas (née Gething)
Parent: Esther Thomas
Parent: William Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: stipendiary magistrate
Area of activity: Education; History and Culture; Law; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: David Williams

Born 29 August 1863, the third child of William and Esther Thomas, at Llethr Enoch (now in ruins), Cwm-du (near Talley), in the parish of Llandeilo-fawr. His childhood was spent on the adjoining farm of Cefn Hendre, both farms being part of the Taliaris estate. His maternal grandfather was a half-brother of **Thomas Evans** (Tomos Glyn Cothi). His early education, at **Jonah Evans**'s academy at Llansawel and elsewhere locally, was discontinuous, and for a time he worked on his father's farm. But his surviving papers prove that he had already shown a marked interest in local history and antiquities, and, on 15 September 1880, at the age of 17, he entered Llandoverly College. The headmaster, **A. G. Edwards** (the future archbishop), persuaded his parents to send him (at considerable sacrifice) to the University of Oxford, which he entered in October 1883 as a non-collegiate student. He graduated in 1887 with 3rd class honours in Jurisprudence. During his stay at Oxford he was one of the seven original members of the Dafydd ap Gwilym Society, founded in May 1886. It was about this time that he adopted the name 'Lleufer.'

From 1886 to 1892 he held the valuable Tancred scholarship, and this enabled him to read for the Bar. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn on 15 May 1889. He joined the South Wales circuit, holding his first brief at the Carmarthen assizes on 10 December 1889. He married, 18 June 1892, at S. Pancras church, Mary Gethin of Aberdare, a great-grand-daughter of **Tomos Glyn Cothi**.

In 1891 he began contributing to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, having been introduced to this work by **Rees Jenkin Jones** of Aberdare, who had contributed to earlier volumes. He, in turn, invited (**Sir**) **John Edward Lloyd**, in August 1892, to undertake some of the biographies allocated to him. In all, Thomas contributed 27 biographies.

In the meantime he had, in 1892, been appointed assistant commissioner to the royal commission on labour, and conducted enquiries in Wales which are embodied in a report on the agricultural labourer in Wales. When the Welsh land commission was established in March 1893, he became its secretary. Over-work involved him in a serious breakdown in health, and in November 1893 he sailed for South Africa, returning to resume his duties in the following May. He produced an admirable *Digest* of the land commission report, and the volume of appendices to the report which he compiled constitutes his most valuable contribution to historical scholarship.

He left London in 1897 for Swansea where he remained until 1909. His career at the Bar was not distinguished, but this period witnessed the development of his literary and social interests. He was a member of the council of the University College of Wales, and took an active part in the establishment of its law department. He prepared, in 1905, the memorandum which decided the Privy Council to locate the National Library at Aberystwyth, and he persuaded the miners of South Wales to agree to a shilling levy on their wages in aid of its building fund. In 1911 he drafted the memorandum which obtained for the library its privileges under the Copyright Act. He remained interested in the provision of library facilities throughout Wales by means of the Regional Libraries Scheme for Wales and Monmouthshire and the University of Wales extra-mural classes scheme, etc. But his chief preoccupation in these years was with the co-operative movement and with co-partnership schemes in industry. From 1906 onwards he was vice-president of the Labour Co-partnership Association. In the autumn of 1902 he travelled to Canada.

For twenty-four years, from May 1909 until his retirement at the age of 70 in 1933, he was stipendiary magistrate for Pontypridd and Rhondda. The outbreak of the great Cambrian Combine strike in 1910, which led to riots at Tonypanyd, proved a severe test of his abilities, and a tribute was paid by general Macready, the officer-in-charge of the troops drafted into the area, to his careful handling of the situation. His judicial work (on numerous occasions he deputised for county court judges) was marked by tact and firmness, but his chief distinction in this respect is that he was the pioneer in Wales of the system of probation at the courts. In 1917 he was chairman of the Welsh panel of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (the report of which was prepared by **Edgar Chappell**).

His advocacy of co-operation led to an interest in housing and town-planning, and he was one of the founders of the Cardiff Workers' Cooperative Garden Village Society, which built the Cardiff suburb of Rhiwbina. He was co-founder (1911) and president of the School of Social Service for Wales, and from 1915 to 1919 was president of the Workers' Educational Association for Wales. He remained an active member of the councils of the National Museum of Wales and of the University Colleges of Cardiff and Aberystwyth, and was deputy-chancellor of the University of Wales from 1915 to 1917. He was also a keen member of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and was awarded the Cymmrodorion medal in 1939. He was also an active member of the Cambrian Archaeological Association and a member of the Board of Celtic Studies from its foundation in 1919 until 1931. The University of Wales conferred on him the degree of LL.D. (honoris causa) in 1921, and he was granted a knighthood in the New Year's honours list of 1931.

His health was never good, and in 1927 he suffered a severe illness. In March 1932 he met with an accident which largely incapacitated him. He died at Rhiwbina on 8 August 1940. For fully fifty years he had been active in every important enterprise for the betterment of the people of Wales.

Author

Emeritus Professor David Williams, (1900 - 1978)

Sources

Private research

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Daniel Lleufer Thomas](#)

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