

## LEWIS, THOMAS (1868 - 1953), Principal of Brecon Memorial College

**Name:** Thomas Lewis  
**Date of birth:** 1868  
**Date of death:** 1953  
**Spouse:** Augusta Flora Lewis (née Williams)  
**Parent:** Anna Lewis (née Davies)  
**Parent:** James Lewis  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Principal of Brecon Memorial College  
**Area of activity:** Education; Religion  
**Author:** William Thomas Pennar Davies

Born 14 December 1868 at Pant-y-waun, Blaen-y-coed, Carmarthenshire, the fifth child of James and Anna Lewis, one of twelve children (although two died when young), including **Howell** ('Elfed'), the eldest. There were talented and gifted musicians on the mother's side of the family and this influenced **Howell**, the hymn-writer, and Thomas who had a good baritone voice and who, for a period, used to conduct singing festivals and eisteddfodau in the Brecon area. He inherited also physical strength and style which gave him the ability to excel in sport and football. The children were raised in a chapel culture and Thomas Lewis never lost his respect for **Thomas Charles 'Geiriadur Ysgrythyrol**. His childhood home was the small holding of Pen-lan in the parish of Cynwyl Elfed. His father used to conduct a weekly prayer meeting for young men in a cottage known as Cwmcafit.

He was educated at Cwmclynmaen board school until he was 14 when he went to live with his brother **Howell** at Buckley, Flintshire. After a period in the board school there he became a pupil at Alun School in Mold. He gained University of London matriculation in January, 1885 and that year he was admitted to University College, Bangor. In 1886 he enrolled at the Lancaster Congregational College, Manchester, and became a student at Owens College in Manchester. He graduated B.A. (London) in 1888 and M.A. (London) in 1890 with honours in classics. Between 1889 and 1894 he was a student at the Congregational College. He was successful in the scripture examinations of the University of London gaining the qualifications of A.T.S. and F.T.S. In 1893 he received the B.D. degree of the University of St. Andrews during the brief period when that University awarded the B.D. through examination only to students of some colleges. Also in 1893 he was able to study at the University of Marburg as part of his final year in the Congregational College. He won the Rees (1889) and Dr Williams (1892) scholarships and the Bles Prize in Hebrew from the University of Manchester (1893). At Marburg he had particular respect for Herrmann, an adherent of Ritschlian theology.

In 1894 he was appointed Professor of Hebrew in his college at Manchester where he remained until 1897 when he became Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament studies at Memorial College Brecon - the first of a new generation of teachers that moved Wales along the path of liberal modernism. He married Flora (Augusta Flora Williams), daughter of Jacob Williams, Whalley Range, Manchester, in 1898 and they had three sons and three daughters. In 1907 he succeeded **David Rowlands**, 'Dewi Môn' as the principal of the Memorial College and governed there in a kindly fashion until his retirement in 1943.

He was the second to become dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Wales (1907-10) and in 1909 he went to Geneva to represent the faculty at the celebrations of the anniversary of the birth of Calvin. In 1920 he represented the Welsh Independents in the celebrations of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in Boston, U.S.A. He served on the education committee and on the county council of Brecknockshire, as a governor of secondary schools and in denominational and public circles. He was a county council alderman, 1930-48. He was Chairman of the Welsh Independents Union, 1936-37 and gave his address from the chair in 1937 in London on the relationship of the Old Testament to the New. He was chairman on two occasions of the South Wales Union of English Congregationalists.

He became pastor of the churches of Aber and Benaiah, Tal-y-bont on Usk in 1949. He died in the manse of that pastorate on May 22, 1953, seven months before his brother 'Elfed'. He was buried in the town cemetery of Brecon in the presence of 'Elfed'. He had a deliberate, calm manner in the pulpit and in committee and he possessed wide and deep scholarship and his select library contained all the necessary source books. In his lectures he aided his students by purposeful repetition. He made a strong impression on all who attended his informal services in the college. Amongst all the teachers at Brecon College in his period he was the one who could best be described as a 'gentleman'.

He published *Llyfr y proffwyd Amos* (in the series *Llawlyfrau'r Ysgol Sul*, 1909), *Y Proffwydi a chrefydd yr Iddewon* (c. 1914 in the *Old Testament series*), *Llenyddiaeth a diwinyddiaeth y proffwydi* (1923) - according to **Vernon Lewis**, his best work, *Yr Hen Destament, ei gynnwys a'i genadwri* (1931), two translations of hymns and also articles in *The International Standard Bible Dictionary*, *Hasting's Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, and *Geiriadur Beiblaidd*.

### Author

**William Thomas Pennar Davies**, (1911 - 1996)

### Sources

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personal knowledge

### Additional Links

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