

**HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS
COMMISSION. REPORT ON
MANUSCRIPTS IN THE WELSH
LANGUAGE, VOL. I, PART III-
PENIARTH**

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HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION. ^{ct}

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REPORT
ON
MANUSCRIPTS
IN THE
WELSH LANGUAGE.

VOL. I.
PART III.—PENIARTH.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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THE SECOND PORTION
OF THE
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AT
PENIARTH, TOWYN, MERIONETH.

Rec. May 1, 1906

INTRODUCTION.

THE present part completes the report on documents in the *Welsh* language at Peniarth, and deals in particular with manuscripts written by Sir Thomas Wiliems of Trevriw, John Jones of Gelli Lyvdy, and Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt.

There is probably no more pathetic case in literature than that of Sir Thomas Wiliems. He received his education at Oxford, and graduated M.A. in 1578, in which year we also find him settled at Trevriw as curate. William Salesbury was a near neighbour, and evidently interested himself in the young curate, whom he seems to have straightway infected with his own enthusiasm for Welsh studies, and to have mapped out for him a piece of original work, which only a man with his life before him could aspire to accomplish. It can hardly be a mere coincidence that, as early as February 1574, at the very threshold of his career, young Wiliems should have finished a transcript of the only Welsh Dictionary* then in existence, with additions and "corrections by William Salesbury." From this time forward traces of his pen and industry can be followed through a large number of the older MSS., and in word lists, excerpts, and transcripts. For thirty-four years he laboured steadfastly, undaunted by poverty and the crusty conduct of certain owners of manuscripts, at his Latin-Welsh and Welsh-Latin Dictionaries, which have the distinction of being based on materials and illustrations drawn direct from originals, thus anticipating modern methods by three centuries. He forsook the church and took up the practice of medicine some time before 1592, but he does not appear to have mended his fortune by the change. In health too he seems, about the year 1603, to be growing more and more conscious of increasing infirmities. Fearing probably that he might die before his work was done, he

*Sir T.
Wiliems of
Trevriw,*

* See Havod MS. 26, Part I., which is a copy of Cardiff MS. 82, which in turn is a copy of Peniarth MS. 230, which is the first Welsh Dictionary proper, though there were plenty of Vocabularies much earlier.

Sir T.
Williams, of
Trevric—
continued.

recklessly abandons his patients, and settles down to cast his accumulated material into final form. He tells us that during the next five years he laboured so incessantly at his Dictionaries that he lost all count of the days of the week, and became so poor, that he and his family would have lacked the barest necessities of life were it not for the generosity of Sir John Wynn, of Gwydir. And what has been the meed of this noble devotion to his native tongue? Three hundred years of forgetfulness. He died no one knows when, he was buried no one knows where. The abyss of silence closed round him unhonoured and unsung. His life-work completed, he had not the satisfaction of seeing it printed; but he had scarcely time to grow cold in his grave before another entered into his labour, abridged his work, and printed it under his own name. This may seem strange, nay even contemptible to the uninitiated, but title-pages not unfrequently serve but as masks of truth. Dr. John Davies's abridgment, the *Dictionarium Duplex* of 1632, remains to this day the most reliable work in Welsh Lexicography. And yet no Welsh Society has ever proposed to print the entire work of Sir Thomas Williams, and thus render tardy justice to the memory of a scholar who sacrificed everything to serve the students of language.

vita Danielis.

We are also indebted to the same hand for a unique copy of the life of the Welsh Saint, Daniel: this has never been printed.

John Jones of
Gelli Lyedy.

In services to Wales and its literature John Jones takes precedence of all his namesakes. It was, therefore, natural to consult the *Dictionary of National Biography* for the leading facts of his life, but it was a fruitless idea: he is not even mentioned there. The *Dictionary of Eminent Welshmen*, however, informs us that he was "an attorney in the court of the Marches of Wales," and that he early withdrew himself "because he had too much honesty to pursue it." It is clear, from particulars given in MS. 315 below, that he had personal knowledge of legal procedure, but lacked common prudence in business matters. It is also clear that in early life he had sufficient private means to make the pursuit of a profession a matter of choice rather than of necessity, and that his interest in the Welsh language, and its literature, dominated his whole life. For over forty-years we find him steadily at work making really beautiful copies of every old manuscript he could borrow,

and were it not for this supreme, though somewhat indiscriminate devotion of his pen to things Welsh, we should have lost altogether certain texts, which no longer exist except in his transcripts. He was in the habit of inserting particulars about his originals, the date and place of writing, as well as his own pedigree, at the beginning of his copies. We therefore know that he spent a very large portion of his life in prison,—“in the Fleet in London.” How he got there may be read on page 1120 below. The great majority of his transcripts are now at Peniarth, but a very considerable number are distributed among other collections, though it is said that John Jones bequeathed *all* to his friend and kinsman, Robert Vaughan.

*John Jones, of
Gelli Lyddy—
continued.*

The transcripts of Robert Vaughan are also numerous and important, and some of them are wonderful imitations of their twelfth and thirteenth century originals, so much so that the unwary have been known to pay fanciful prices for his seventeenth-century copies, under the impression that they were securing very valuable old manuscripts. Robert Vaughan was educated at Oxford. He was a man of scholarly tastes, with a bent for antiquarian and genealogical research. The details of his labours are recorded in our reports. He was also, unlike John Jones, a man of business, who directed his energies by a steady purpose, pursued through life at what must have been a serious tax on his modest revenues. No student can refrain from paying him a most sincere tribute of admiration and gratitude for his prescience and skill in bringing together the noblest monuments of Kymric history and literature. Though it is true that his collection of Welsh MSS. is the finest in existence, still his merit was not in making it the biggest collection, but in securing nearly every manuscript of importance in the language, leaving transcripts to others. “Everybody” has heard of the famed Red Book of Hergest, our largest vellum MS., which is the glory of the Jesus College Library. But how many have noticed that out of its 1,442 folio columns, more than three-fourths of the whole are mere transcripts of older texts at Peniarth. And this is by no means a singular instance. It is because Vaughan displayed so much knowledge and perseverance as a collector, because he hunted, rescued, and brought together under his own roof such a number of documents of the first importance, which to this day out-rival all other collections of

*Robert
Vaughan,
of Hergest.*

*Robert
Vaughan, of
Henwri—
continued*

Welsh MSS. put together,—it is for these reasons that his name should be held in esteem and honour, and his memory kept green in every parish throughout Wales. It should also be stated that Vaughan collected a large number of MSS. in English and Latin, dealing with the History of Wales and the Marches, as well as the best copy of Henry of Huntingdon, and one of the two leading texts of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, in a beautiful manuscript of the fourteenth century.

Pedigrees.

The great genealogical compilations of Lewis Dwnn and of Robert Vaughan,—MSS. 268 and 287,—are deservedly held in high estimation, even though they may serve to mark stages in the growth of many a myth. Number 288 has the distinction of being the biggest manuscript in the Welsh language. It is however a mere copy of Number 287, with a few later additions.

Attention may also be called to the numerous Kalendars, the early versions of the Office of the Virgin, the Life of Ursula, the Taxatio of 1292, the transcript of Leland's Itinerary, the Bardic Licence and Welsh Dictionary of Griffith Hiraethog, the first lexicographer to give quotations to illustrate the meaning and use of words.

The final paragraph must be in the first person. For ten years it has been my privilege to pay frequent visits to Peniarth, in the fitful prosecution of the work of reporting on the collection there, and I wish to place on record here that everything was always done in the pleasantest way, to facilitate my inspection of the MSS. From first to last I met with nothing but courtesy, hospitality, and a friendly welcome. Long may the sun shine on Mr. and Mrs. Wynne.

J. GWENOGVRYN EVANS.

Tremvan, Pwllheli, April 1905.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF CONTENTS.

- Adar llwch gwin, 1037.
 Alexander. *See* Aristotle.
 Andras, bucheff. 1051.
 Annales ab origine mundi ad
 Christum, 1037, 1071, 1096.
See Beibil.
 Annerch-lythyr, 1041, 1042.
 Arderyth, Battle of, &c., 1096.
 Areith, Gr: ap J., 1041; J. B.
 hir, 1042; Yolo Goch, 1106;
 Lielo, 1042; Wgan 1041, 1042,
 1043.
 Aristotle and Alexander, 1011,
 1029, 1038.
 Arms, description of, &c., 1008,
 1049, 1050, 1054, 1071, 1093.
 Arthur, Hanes, 1037.
 Arwyd y xii., 1031.
 Arwyd, y xv., 1035, 1036, 1038.
 Arwystli, 1061.
 Asser, Extracts from the Annals
 of, 1099.
 Astrology and Astronomy, 1006,
 1014, 1045.
 Athanasius, the creed of,
 Avallen, 1005.
*Autographs—MSS. wholly or
 partially, in the hands of:—*
 D. Benwyn, 1078.
 D. davydh, 1050.
 Dwan, Lewis, 1081-90.
 Ellis, David, 1026.
 Ellis, Peter, 1082 [1102].
 Evans, Thomas, 1014.
 Griffith Hiraethog, 1020, 1021-23,
 1058.
 Griffith, Jasper, ? 1122.
 Griffith, J. T., 1030.
 Gattyn Owain, 1013.
 Humphrey Humphreys, 1104.
 Huw Kae llwyd, 1016.
 Jones, John, 1035-48, 1071, 1073,
 1076, 1077, 1078, 1105-22.
 Lewis, Hugh, 1021.
 Lewis Morgannwg, 1021.
 Langford, Richard, ? 1102.
 Llywelyn ap Sion, 1005.
 Lhuyl, Edward, 1005, 1069.
 Morris, Edward, 1027.
 Morris, Lewis, 1011.
 Owen Gwyned, 1082.
 Owan, Aneurin, 1011.
 Owen-Pugbe, W., 1069.
 Pennant, Hugh, 1005-07.
 Price, T. (*Carnkwanawc*), 1021.
 Rhys Cain, 1124.
 Rhys, J. D., 1070, 1093, 1122.
 Salesbury, W., 1073.
 Simwnt rychan, 1001, 1015.
 Sion Kain, 1090, 1124.
 Sion Klywedog, 1090.
 Thomas, J., of Rhysegog, 1123.
 Thomas, Richard, 1027.
 Vaughan, Griffith, 1103.
 Vaughan, James, 1021.
 Vaughan, Sir J., 1080.
 Vaughan, Robert, 1011, 1059, 1060-
 62, 1071, 1082, 1092, 1095, 1096,
 1098, 1099, 1100-3.
 William ap Howel, 1123.
 William Kynwal, 1008, 1034, 1058.
 William Dyvi, 1008.
 Williams, Sir T., 1015, 1049, 1054.
 Wynon o Las Ffyns, Ellis, 1025.
 Wynn, Rev. W., 1025, 1063, 1066,
 1090.
 Wynne, John, of Gwydir, 1055.
 Wynne, W. W. E., 1018, 1021, 1061.
 Bangor, destruction of, 1037.
 Bangor vawr, tri phorthor Perllan,
 1039.