

FAVOURED WITH FREQUENT REVIVALS



Map of Wales showing some places mentioned in the text

**FAVOURED
WITH
FREQUENT
REVIVALS**

Revivals in Wales 1762-1862

D. Geraint Jones

THE HEATH CHRISTIAN TRUST

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C/O 31 Whitchurch Road, Cardiff, CF14 3JN

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First Published 2001
ISBN 0 907193 10 2

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Preface

Wales, the Land of Revivals, has been blessed with many periods of awakening and spiritual blessing during its history. Perhaps no period was so glorious as the hundred years between 1762 and 1862 when as one author has said 'there were at least fifteen outstanding revivals in Wales.' Yet perhaps it has not been fully appreciated the degree to which Wales was blessed at this time. Indeed hardly a year seemed to pass by without there being a revival at the local, regional, or national level. Not that it was a period of unbroken blessing everywhere in Wales: indeed, there were periods of widespread declension, particularly between the waves of regional and national revival. Yet even during those times there were places that enjoyed the smile of the Lord; and it would be difficult to find another 8000 square miles that has been so signally blessed for so long a period of time.

The present work, though not a detailed account (that will have to wait some future time), aims to give a brief outline of the revivals that occurred during this period, as well as presenting some fuller accounts of a selection of them. Many of these accounts have either never appeared in English before, or have never been republished since they appeared in print.

I should like to express my thanks to the following: Mrs Ceinwen Swann for correcting my Welsh translations; Dr Eifion Evans for all his help and assistance; and Rev. Vernon Higham for his continual encouragement and desire to see this material in print.

*D. Geraint Jones,
Cardiff,
October 2001*

Abbreviations

- CJJ* Owen Thomas, *Cofiant Jones Jones, Talsarn*, Wrexham, 1874.
- HBNC* David Jones, *Hanes y Bedyddwyr yn Neheubarth Cymru*, Caerfyrddin, 1839.
- HEAC* Thomas Rees & John Thomas, *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynol Cymru*, i-iv, Liverpool, 1871-5.
- HPNW* Thomas Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, 2nd ed., London, 1883.
- LTC* D.E. Jenkins, *Life of Thomas Charles of Bala*, i-iii, Denbigh, 1908.
- MC* John Hughes, *Methodistiaeth Cymru*, i-iii, Gwreccsam, 1851-6.
- (B) Baptist
- (CM) Calvinistic Methodist
- (I) Independent/Congregational

Favoured with Frequent Revivals

Wales at the outbreak of the Great Awakening in 1735 was certainly no stranger to revival. The ministries of Rees Prichard, William Wroth, Walter Cradock, Vavasor Powell, Stephen Hughes, and many others, had been greatly blessed, during the seventeenth century.¹ Even Griffith Jones, 'the morning star' of the Awakening, as early as 1713, had numerous congregations of 3,000 or more, when curate of Laugharne.² Various Baptist and Independent Churches, such as Penmain, Hengoed, and Pant-teg experienced local revivals to varying degrees before the main outpouring began in 1735 with the conversions of Howel Harris and Daniel Rowland.³

During the period up to the late 1740s the ministries of many such as Howel Davies, Peter Williams, William Williams, Pantycelyn, as well as some of the Dissenters, were attended with powerful movements of the Spirit.⁴ Llangeitho was one place particularly favoured. It is said that during the whole ministry of Daniel Rowland, from 1735 to 1790, there were about seven periods of powerful revival. The first, early in his ministry, is said to have begun while he was reading, or rather praying in the words of the Litany, 'By thine agony [in Welsh extreme agony] and bloody sweat'. 'The touching and melting manner in which Rowlands repeated these words, affected the whole assembly so much, that they almost all wept, and wept loudly . . . Many in the congregation were really convinced and converted, as their subsequent conduct proved.'⁵

¹ See *HPNW* for details.

² Thomas Kelly, *Griffith Jones Llanddowror: Pioneer in Adult Education*, (Cardiff, 1950), 18.

³ *HPNW* 275-276.

⁴ For fuller details see Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*, (Edinburgh, 1985).

⁵ John Owen, *Religion in Wales: A Memoir of the Rev. Daniel Rowlands, Late of Llangeitho, Cardiganshire*, (London, [1848]), 114.

But contentions and doctrinal disputes between Harris and the other Calvinistic Methodist leaders put an effective brake on the movement,⁶ and the 1750s were years of comparative barrenness.

Revival of 1762-1764

There were a few local revivals before the next mighty wave of blessing. It was said of the Baptists in 1760 that the 'churches [were] in peace; additions to most, many to some', and in 1761 some had 'large additions'⁷ One which received many was Blaenywaun where in 1760 there were some seeking baptism each month for a considerable time.⁸ Then in 1762, the dawn broke, and the next great movement of the Spirit occurred. It is traditionally held to have begun at Llangeitho 'on the day that Mr W. Williams brought the hymn-book entitled *Y Mor o Wydr* [The Sea of Glass] to Llangeitho.'⁹ The revival was characterised by much rejoicing, and even 'leaping in jubilation as did David before the ark.' Many places in Cardiganshire were affected, and the revival spread to the neighbouring counties. Much excitement and controversy was raised concerning the revival. William Williams, Pantycelyn wrote two booklets about the rejoicing, *Llythyr Martha Philopur* [Martha Philopur's Letter] and *Ateb Philo Evangelius* [Philo Evangelius' Reply] (See **Account 1**, containing an extract from *Ateb Philo Evangelius* concerning the effects of the revival).¹⁰

Revivals 1765-1789

In 1765 there was a local revival at Mynydd-Bach (I) under the ministry of Lewis Rees.¹¹ The years 1770-1771, 1774-1775 and 1786 also seem to

⁶ Discussed fully in Geraint Tudur, *Howell Harris: From Conversion to Separation, 1735-1750*, (Cardiff, 2000), 151-228.

⁷ Joshua Thomas, *A History of the Baptist Association in Wales*, (London, 1795), 59.

⁸ Benjamin Rees, *Hanes Eghwysi y Bedyddwyr yn Blaenywaun; Gerazim; Penuel, Cemaes; a Tabernacl, Trewyddel, Sir Benfro*, (Llangollen, 1899), 14.

⁹ Robert Jones, *Drych yr Amseroedd*, gol. G. M. Ashton, (Caerdydd, 1958), 84-86.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the contents and the revival in general see R. Geraint Gruffydd, *Revival and its Fruit*, (Bridgend, 1981).

¹¹ *HEAC* ii. 14.