

BLACKWELL, JOHN (Alun; 1797 - 1840), cleric and poet

Name: John Blackwell
Pseudonym: Alun
Date of birth: 1797
Date of death: 1840
Spouse: Matilda Blackwell (née Dear)
Parent: Mary Blackwell
Parent: Peter Blackwell
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and poet
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Poetry; Religion
Author: Thomas Parry

Son of Peter and Mary Blackwell, Ponterwyl, Mold. He received no formal education, and at the age of 11 he was apprenticed shoemaker with William Kirkham, who was interested in Welsh poetry. Having read extensively in Welsh and English, he soon began to attend meetings of Cymreigyddion societies and to compete at eisteddfodau, winning a prize at an eisteddfod at Mold in 1823 for an *awdl* on 'Maes Garmon,' and another at Ruthin in the same year for an *awdl* on 'Genedigaeth Iorwerth II.' He was also successful as a writer of essays, and letters written by him appeared in *Y Gwyllydydd*. All this brought him to the notice of certain gentlemen and clergymen, who subscribed to a fund to enable him to pursue a course of education.

In January 1824 he went to **Thomas Richards** (1785 - 1855), to prepare for entrance to a university, and remained there till December of that year, when he entered Jesus College, Oxford; he graduated in 1828. During his stay at the university he continued to compete occasionally at eisteddfodau - his elegy to bishop Heber won the prize at the eisteddfod held at Denbigh in 1828 - and read everything he could find relating to the history and literature of Wales in the Bodleian and the College library. Having been ordained, and licensed curate of Holywell in 1829, he was appointed rector of Maenordeifi in 1833. He was editor of *Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas er Taenu Gwybodaeth Fuddiol*, published under the auspices of the S.P.C.K., for the eighteen months of its existence, 1834-5.

In 1839 he married Matilda Dear, Pistyll, near Holywell. He died 19 May 1840. A marble tablet to his memory was placed on the wall of Maenordeifi ('Manordivy') church.

Alun is remembered for his poems in the free metres: 'Rhywun,' 'Cerdd Hela,' 'Cathl i'r Eos,' 'Cân Gwraig y Pysgotwr,' and 'Abaty Tintern' (a free translation of an English original with four additional lines at the end). These poems are the forerunners of the lyrical poetry produced by the romantic movement.

Author

Sir Thomas Parry, (1904 - 1985)

Sources

John Blackwell, Griffith Edwards (ed.), *Ceinion Alun* (Rhuthyn 1851)

Further Reading

T. Morgan, *Enwogion Cymreig 1700-1900* (1907), p.24

Friends of Friendless Churches: [Alun the Poet: John Blackwell at Manordeifi](#) (accessed January 2020)

Wikipedia Article: [John Blackwell](#)

Works

John Blackwell, *Gwaith barddonol John Blackwell (Alun)* (Liverpool 1879)

William Thomas, *Yr Hen Amser Gynt, Yr awen lawen; sef, Casgliad o ganiadau dewisol* (Caerfyrddin 1851), pp.41-42

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VIAF: 20537290

Wikidata: Q3403756

Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Parry, T., (1959). BLACKWELL, JOHN (Alun; 1797 - 1840), cleric and poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 10 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-BLAC-JOH-1797>

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