

DAVIS, DAVID Dafis Castellhywel (1745-1827), Arian minister, poet, and schoolmaster

Name: David Davis
Pseudonym: Dafis Castellhywel
Date of birth: 1745
Date of death: 1827
Spouse: Anne Davies (née Evans)
Child: David Davies
Child: Timothy Davis
Parent: Timothy Jacob
Gender: Male
Occupation: Arian minister, poet, and schoolmaster
Area of activity: Education; Poetry; Religion

Born at Goitre-isaf, Betws Bledrws, Cardiganshire, 14 February 1745, son of Timothy Jacob, he was accepted as a member at Cilgwyn 'in the year 1763 in the 18th year of his age.' He was taught by David Jones (Llanybydder), T. Lloyd (Llangeler), and [Joshua Thomas](#), and further (1763-7) at the Academy (Grammar) School and the Academy at Carmarthen then under [Jenkin Jenkins](#); he was, for a time, an assistant master at the school. Towards the end of 1768 he became, jointly with [David Lloyd](#) (1724 - 1779), minister of Llwyn-rhyd-owen, Ciliau Aeron, Allt-y-blaca, Pen-rhiw, and Mydroilyn, and later on of Bwlch-y-fadfa as well, making his home at Plas-bach, Ciliau Aeron, where he married Anne Evans of Foelallt, grand-daughter of ' Squire Davies ' of Plas-bach. About 1782 he moved to Castellhywel in the vale of Cletwr, and from that time on was known as ' Dafis Castellhywel.' Here he kept a school for over thirty years and his reputation as a teacher spread throughout Wales; for many years candidates for Anglican orders were ordained direct from the school. The names of 111 of his former pupils are to be found in the list of subscribers to *Telyn Dewi*. He was a friend of [Richard Price](#), [Edward Williams](#) (Iolo Morganwg), [Thomas Roberts](#), of Llwyn'rhudol, [John Jones](#) of Glan-y-gors, and [Thomas Evans](#) (Tomos Glyn Cothi); and through his influence many in his neighbourhood became supporters of the French Revolution. In 1801-2 there was dissension in his churches, and the more advanced elements built the Unitarian chapels at Pant-y-defaid and Capel-y-groes. He retired 16 January 1820 after having been a minister for fifty-two years. He published a translation of Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, 1779, another of Gray's ' *Elegy*,' 1789, *Cri Carcharor dan farn Marwolaeth*, 1792, and in 1824 a volume of his own verse entitled *Telyn Dewi*. He died 3 July 1827 and was buried in Llanwenog churchyard.

' Dafis Castellhywel 's eldest son was DAVID DAVIS of Neath (1778 - 1846), Unitarian minister and schoolmaster, born, according to [Walter J. Evans](#) (N.L.W. MS. 10327), 2 April 1778. He was educated at home and at Carmarthen Academy (1796-1800), and settled at Neath, where he opened a school [1801] and became the first minister of the Unitarian congregation in that town. Here, he fell under the influence of Joseph Priestley and, in 1802, founded the Unitarian Society of South Wales, although the credit for this is usually given to [Edward Williams](#) (Iolo Morganwg) (*Monthly Repository*, 1811, 189). After many years spent as a minister and an able and erudite schoolmaster, his health broke down [1827] and his mind

was impaired for the rest of his life [from 1843 to 1846 he lived at Swansea]. He published a number of small booklets and edited *Telyn Dewi*, 1824. He suffered a disappointment when [D. Lewis Jones](#) was appointed (1814) tutor at Carmarthen, and for a time he and [John James](#) of Gelli-onnen (1779 - 1864) seriously considered starting a specifically Unitarian college at Neath, but the project came to nothing. He died 4 December 1846 and was buried in the cemetery of Lammas Street chapel, Carmarthen.

TIMOTHY DAVIS (1779 - 1860) born 20 November 1779, was the second son of ' Dafis Castellhywel,' and he too was a Unitarian minister and schoolmaster; having been educated at home, in the Academy (Grammar) School, Carmarthen, under [David Peter](#), from 3 January 1798 until he went later in the year to Carmarthen Academy, where he remained till 1802, he became, about 1801, joint minister with his father although he was at the same time assisting at the college school under [Peter](#) - 'even at Carmarthen my last two years were spent in attending principally to the Grammar School.' He was minister at Llwyn-rhyd-owen from 1801/2 to 1810, and it was this appointment which was probably the bone of contention between ' Dafis Castellhywel ' and [Charles Lloyd](#) (1766 - 1829). He was minister at Coventry (1810-19) and Evesham (1819 - 18 July 1853). He translated (part of) Coke's *Scripture Commentary* and published two Welsh sermons, 1832 and 1848. He died 28 November 1860. His very interesting diaries are now in the National Library - N.L.W.MSS. 5487-99.

There was another TIMOTHY DAVIS (1709 - 1771), minister of Cilgwyn, Cardiganshire, and its associated congregations. He married in 1740 Mary (or Sarah), daughter of [Jenkin Jones](#) (1695 - 1725), also minister of Cilgwyn, who was son of [John Jones](#) (1640? - 1722) of Llwyn-rhys - see the article [Jones](#) of Llwyn-rhys and N.L.W. MS. 10327.

Sources

Memoir by 'Tau Gimel,' 1828

Lloyd Letters (1754–96) (1908) (liv-lxi)

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 5490C](#)

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NLW Archives: [Timothy Davis \(of Coventry and Evesham\) Manuscripts](#)

Published date: 1959

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