

## JONES, EDMUND (1702 - 1793), Independent minister, and author



**Name:** Edmund Jones  
**Date of birth:** 1702  
**Date of death:** 1793  
**Spouse:** Mary Jones  
**Parent:** Catherine Lewis  
**Parent:** John Lewis  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Independent minister, and author  
**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Religion  
**Author:** Annie Grace Bowen-Jones

Born in the parish of Aberystroth, Monmouth, 1 April 1702, son of John and Catherine Lewis of Pen-llwyn, a small holding (near the present Nant-y-glo railway station). Both parents were members of the Independent church at Penmaen. His only education was gained from the curate of Aberystroth, Howel Prosser. He began preaching in 1722, assisted the minister at Penmaen, and was ordained there in 1734. In 1727 and 1728 he on the one side and [Miles Harry](#) on the other were the protagonists in acrimonious public debates on adult baptism which were held at Blaenau Gwent in Aberystroth where there was a strong Baptist church. Edmund Jones had charge of the branch of Penmaen church which met at Ty'n llwyn farm in Ebwy Fawr and had expected to succeed to the pastorate of Penmaen, which, however, went in 1740 to [Philip David](#). Disappointed, he removed in July 1740 to Pontypool and settled at the Transh, where he built an Independent meeting house but still retained charge of the Ebwy Fawr congregation. According to George Whitefield he sold his books for £15 to complete the building.

A strong Calvinist and a zealous Evangelical, he was responsible for bringing [Howel Harris](#) to preach for the first time in Monmouthshire in March and April 1738, at Ebwy Fawr (probably in Ty-llwyn), on which occasions the subsequent leaders of Methodism in Monmouthshire were converted, notably [John Powell](#) and [Morgan John Lewis](#).

Though friendly to [Harris](#), Jones feared that the progress of Methodism among Nonconformists might draw many of them to the Established Church, as [Harris](#) desired, in hope of reforming it from within. He therefore actively encouraged some societies, as at Devynnock and Neath, to form themselves into Independent churches, and this caused differences between [Harris](#) and himself. But the strong Calvinistic views of both were a common bond to the day of [Harris](#)'s death. Edmund Jones's piety and evangelical zeal were admired both by Whitefield and the countess of Huntingdon, and he was always welcome at the latter's Trevecka college.

He was married but childless; his wife Mary (born in 1696) died 1 August 1770. Their married life was very happy, but it is a baseless legend that Whitefield decided to find a wife after seeing their happy state. Jones was always poor, but always generous. He was known to have given his greatcoat on one occasion and his shirt on another to poorer people whom he met on his travels.

An indefatigable preacher, he itinerated frequently in Wales and in England. In 1782 he travelled 400 miles on foot in North Wales, preaching twice daily; even in 1789 when 87 years of age, he preached 405 times. He was not, however, a popular preacher. Apart from various volumes of sermons he is best known for his [A geographical, historical, and religious account of the parish of Aberystroth](#) , 1779, a competent piece of work which requires several readings for the right appreciation of many of the facts incidentally or implicitly referred to in it, and also his [A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the Principality of Wales](#) , 1780, which is a farrago of the most astonishing superstitions, in all of which he firmly believed; hence he was frequently referred to as 'Yr Hen Broffwyd' (The Old Prophet). His diaries for nine years survive at the N.L.W., having been rescued from use as wrapping paper in a Pontypool shop shortly after his death.

Edmund Jones was a man of dual personality - fearless in preaching and in founding new churches, a zealous evangelical and a firm Calvinist, yet frightened of apparitions and terrified by bad omens. He was devoid of poetic feeling but an incessant recorder and chronicler of religious developments, and his name recurs in almost every work dealing with 18th century Wales. An excellent article on him appeared in *Yr Adolygydd*, 1850, by [Evan Jones](#) (Ieuan Gwynedd), reprinted later in his collected works.

### Author

Annie Grace Bowen-Jones

### Sources

NLW: [NLW MSS 7021-7030A: Diaries of Edmund Jones, Pontypool](#)

Howel Harris's letters and diaries, also in N.L.W.

Thomas Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales from its rise in 1633 to the present time* (London 1883), 152-4, 367-70, 430-5

*Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru*, 67-71

*Memoirs of the life of the Rev. G. Whitefield ... Faithfully selected from his original papers, journals, and letters* (London 1772), 260

*Enwogion y Ffydd* (1880), iii

'Spiritual Botanology,' 1771, preserved in manuscript at Newport Public Library

*Seren Gomer*, 1825, 1851

*Y Cofiadur*, 1825

## Further reading

Edmund Jones, Adam Coward (ed.), *A Spiritual Botanology* (Newport 2017)

Adam Coward, [Edmund Jones – Total Legend](#), 'Rambles and Studies in Welsh History' blog (accessed April 2020)

Adam Coward, [What the Heck is a 'Spiritual Botanology'?](#), 'Rambles and Studies in Welsh History' blog (accessed April 2020)

Adam Coward, 'Spiritual Journeys: "Purposeful Travel" and the Writings of the Reverend Edmund Jones (1702–1793)', *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol.22, no.3, September 2018, pp.254–73

Adam Coward, 'The Life and Times of the "Old Prophet": Saint-like Attributes of the Rev Edmund Jones (1702–1793)', in Madeline Gray (ed.), *Rewriting Holiness: Reconfiguring Vitae, Re-signifying Cults* (London 2017)

Adam Coward, 'Maintaining the "Ancient British Opinions of Spirits"? The "Welshness" of Edmund Jones "Yr Hen Broffwyd" (1702–1793)', *Welsh History Review*, Vol.26, no.4, December 2013, pp.535–59

Adam Coward, 'Edmund Jones and the Pwcca'r Trwyn', *Folk-lore*, Vol.126, no.2, July 2015, pp.177–95

## Works

Edmund Jones, [Samson's hair: an eminent representation of the Church of God in two parts](#) (Trefecca 1777)

Edmund Jones, [Two sermons](#) (Trevecka 1781)

Edmund Jones, [Dwy bregeth](#) (Trevecka 1782)

Edmund Jones, [Two sermons](#) (Trevecka 1776)

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