

## KNIGHT, WILLIAM BRUCE (1785 - 1845), Welsh scholar, ecclesiastic, and administrator

**Name:** William Bruce Knight

**Date of birth:** 1785

**Date of death:** 1845

**Spouse:** Maria Elinor Knight (née Traherne)

**Parent:** Margaret Knight (née Bruce)

**Parent:** John Knight

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** Welsh scholar, ecclesiastic, and administrator

**Area of activity:** Public and Social Service, Civil Administration; Religion; Scholarship and Languages

**Author:** Lawrence Thomas

Born 24 December 1785 at Braunton, Devon, the second son of John Knight and Margaret Bruce, daughter of William Bruce, Duffryn, Aberdare and a brother to [John Bruce Pryce](#). His maternal grandparents were Wm. Bruce of Llanblethian, Glamorganshire, and Jane, grand-daughter of Sir Thomas Lewis, Llanishen. When the son was quite young the parents moved from Braunton to Llanblethian. He was educated at Cowbridge grammar school and Sherborne before entering Exeter College, Oxford, where he matriculated 5 May 1803; graduated 1807, and proceeded M.A. 1811. He became curate of Llanishen, Glamorganshire, and then for two years was curate to Dr. Lisle, vicar of S. Fagans, serving the chapel of Llanillterne in that parish. During this period he devoted his leisure to the study of Welsh and Hebrew. In 1815 he was presented to the living of Llanrithyd, Glamorganshire, by Sir John Aubrey, and in 1817, by the trustees of [C. R. M. Talbot](#), to the living of Margam and the consolidated rectory of Llandough-juxta-Cowbridge and S. Mary-church. With the help of a curate he served these parishes from 1817 to 1843, living in the old vicarage, Tynycaeau. He married Maria Elinor Traherne of S. Hilary. In 1843, he moved to Llandaff as archdeacon of Glamorgan, becoming also dean of Llandaff in the same year. He died 8 August 1845 and was buried before the altar in the Lady Chapel, Llandaff.

In the Welsh orthographical controversy which raged during the beginning of the 19th century he championed the conservative cause against [John Jones](#) (Tegid, 1792 - 1852), who sponsored a new system of Welsh orthography. His written works on the subject are *Remarks Historical and Philological on the Welsh Language* and *A Critical Review of John Jones' Reply*. To him is due the chief credit of saving the *Welsh Bible* from the vandalism of [Pughe's](#) followers. Another abiding monument to his scholarship and industry is the revised version of the *Welsh Book of Common Prayer* which he, in conjunction with the examining chaplains in the three other Welsh dioceses, produced in 1841.

Bruce was the outstanding cleric in Llandaff diocese during that period of absentee and semi-absentee bishops. He was made, by successive bishops, canon of Llandaff cathedral, examining chaplain, chancellor of the diocese and of the cathedral, archdeacon of Glamorgan, and, when the office of dean was revived by Parliament 3 and 4 Vict., he became the first dean of Llandaff after a vacancy of 700 years. As examining chaplain he was responsible for candidates for holy orders; for the training of literates in the seminaries, and the place of their ordination, for in those days of non-resident bishops

candidates were often ordained in other dioceses by letters dimissory. He exercised a general supervision over the diocese and by his yearly visitations directed the policy thereof. He was bishop Copleston's indispensable adviser on every detail pertaining to the diocese. He was actively engaged in every church society, e.g. the S.P.C.K., the Church Enlargement Society, the Widows and Orphans Society. He took a keen interest in schools and education and in the eisteddfodau. His home was a depot for Church literature, *Welsh Books of Common Prayer*, and religious tracts. He was interested in church building and himself built Holy Cross, Margam, in 1827. On becoming dean of Llandaff he restored the Lady chapel and in two years collected £20,000 for further restoration. To add to his cares his wife had been a chronic invalid for many years.

## Author

Archdeacon Lawrence Thomas, (1889 - 1960)

## Sources

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*Registrum Collegii exoniensis Register of the rectors, fellows, and other members on the foundation of Exeter college, Oxford. With a history of the college and illustrative documents* (Oxford 1894)

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A. Ollivant, *Some account of the condition of the fabric of Llandaff Cathedral from 1575 to its reopening in 1857* (London 1857)

Llandaff MSS.

*Memoirs of Dean Conybeare*

letters of Bp. Coplestone to W.B.K. (Llandaff MSS)

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Bruce Knight](#)

## Additional Links

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