

LEWIS, DAVID, alias Baker, Charles (1617 - 1679), Jesuit martyr

Name: David Lewis
Pseudonym: Baker, Charles
Date of birth: 1617
Date of death: 1679
Parent: Margaret Lewis (née Prichard)
Parent: Morgan Lewis
Gender: Male
Occupation: Jesuit martyr
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

Born at Abergavenny, son of the Rev. Morgan Lewis, first known headmaster of Abergavenny grammar school, and of Margaret Pritchard, niece to Fr. Augustine Baker, and herself a practising Roman Catholic. This fact, together with the number of recusant children attending the school and the interest taken in them by Fr. Baker, led to questions about Morgan Lewis in the Parliament of 1626; but he was reported to be 'very conformable,' though it appears that he was ultimately reconciled to Rome. Most of the children were brought up in their mother's faith, but David seems to have conformed till his conversion by Fr. Talbot in Paris on a visit in the company of Lord Rivers (c. 1633). Two years after his return he left for Rome (22 August 1638) with funds supplied by Fr. Charles Gwynne, entering the English College on 16 November and receiving priestly orders on 20 July 1642. In 1645 (19 April), under the influence of his uncle, Fr. John Pritchard (alias Lewis), S.J., he entered the Society of Jesus, and after serving his novitiate in Rome and for a short time acting as confessor to the English College, he was sent to South Wales on mission in 1648, ministering to the numerous recusant houses of the district, living for many years with the Morgan family of Llantarnam to whom he was related, and becoming superior of the S. Francis Xavier mission (with headquarters at Cwm, Hereford), from 1667-72 and 1674-9. He preached in both English and Welsh, and was affectionately known in the district as 'tad y tlodion' ('the father of the poor'). Although frequently denounced, he was not molested until the Popish Plot scare of 1678, when under pressure from the local M.P., John Arnold of Llanfihangel Crucornau, and others, he was arrested on his way to mass, 17 November, imprisoned successively at Abergavenny, Monmouth, and Usk, and tried at the Monmouth Assizes at Usk (28 March 1679) under an act of 27 Elizabeth, on the sole charge of being a priest in foreign orders. An account of the trial kept by Lewis himself is printed in *State Trials*, vii, 250-9. Found guilty, he was sent to London, lodged in Newgate (23 May), and confronted with Oates, Bedloe, and Shaftesbury himself, in the hope of some revelation about the supposed plot; failing this, he was sent back to Usk and executed on 27 August 1679. He was beatified by the Roman Church on 15 December 1929. A contemporary engraving of him, at the Carmelite Convent, Lanherne, Cornwall, is reproduced in *St. Peter's Magazine* (Cardiff), May 1923.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, iii, 1, and sources therein cited

T. P. Ellis, *The Catholic Martyrs of Wales, 1535-1680*, 129-40

Catholic Record Society, xii, 247-8, xxvii, 98 ff.

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1925-6(82-99), 1945 (30)

Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1908, 292

St. Peter's Mag. (Cardiff), 1923, 159-68, 189-97, 219-26

Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire*, i, 176-8

The Journals of the House of Commons, ix, 466

Further Reading

David Lewis, *A narrative of the Imprisonment and Tryal of Mr. David Lewis, priest of the Society of Jesus. Written by himself. At the Assizes held at Monmouth March 28. 1679. To which is annexed His last Apeech at the Place of Execution, August 27. 1679* (London? 1679)

Hannah Thomas, *The Society of Jesus in Wales, c.1600-1679*, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, Vol. 1, Issue 4, 2014

Cofflein: Old Bridewell, Usk

Wikipedia Article: [David Lewis](#)

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VIAF: 62434239

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Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Dodd, A. H., (1959). LEWIS, DAVID, alias Baker, Charles (1617 - 1679), Jesuit martyr. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 23 Aug 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-LEWI-DAV-1617>

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