

LEWIS, TIMOTHY RICHARDS (1841 - 1886), surgeon, pathologist, and pioneer in tropical medicine

Name: Timothy Richards Lewis

Date of birth: 1841

Date of death: 1886

Spouse: Emily Frances Lewis (née Brown)

Parent: Britania Lewis (née Richards)

Parent: William Lewis

Gender: Male

Occupation: surgeon, pathologist, and pioneer in tropical medicine

Area of activity: Medicine

Author: Evan David Jones

Born at Hafod, Llan-gan, Carmarthenshire, 31 October 1841, the eldest child of William Lewis and Britania (Richards), his wife. He was brought up in the parish of Crinow, Pembrokeshire, and received his early education at Narberth National School and at the grammar school kept in that town by Joseph and William Edward Morris. He was apprenticed at the age of 15 to a Narberth pharmacist, but after four years he went to London to a pharmacist at Streatham. From there he joined the dispensary of the German hospital at Dalston, where he was able to learn German and to begin his medical studies. Attending classes at University College, 1863-6, he was at the end of the period awarded the Fellowes silver medal. He graduated M.B. (with distinction) and C.M. in 1867. The following year he was placed first on entering and leaving the Army Medical School at Netley. In 1868 it was decided to send the two best pupils of the Medical School to examine German scientific theories on the causes of cholera and to put them to the test in India. Thus T. R. Lewis and David Douglas Cunningham went to India in January 1869, after spending some months in Germany. For over five years they investigated problems concerning cholera, and the results of their labours were published in the *Annual Reports of the Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India*. In 1874 they were both appointed special assistants to the Sanitary Commissioner, Dr. James McNabb Cuningham, and the field of their inquiry was enlarged to include leprosy and other oriental diseases. In 1870 Lewis discovered a nematoid worm which he named ' *Filaria sanguinis hominis*,' after he had observed it in the blood of one of his patients in 1872. This was the helminth named ' *Filaria bancrofti* ' in 1877, but now named ' *Wuchereria bancrofti*.' In 1877 he discovered a flagellate in the blood of rats which bears his name - ' *Trypanosoma lewisi*.' With the appointment of David Cunningham to the chair of physiology in the Calcutta Medical College in 1879, the general work of the Sanitary department of the Indian government fell largely upon the shoulders of T. R. Lewis, who continued special investigations into the pathology of enteric fever and Indian jail diets. He left India in January 1883 to take up an assistant professorship in pathology at Netley, but he retained close contact with the Indian Government, acting as its representative at international conferences on medical and sanitary problems. In 1884-5 he was again called to resume his researches into the causes of cholera, and to examine the theory of Robert Koch, who had discovered the ' *commabacillus*.' He was secretary to the committee of scientists appointed to investigate the theory. The weight of

evidence at the time was found to be against the reception of Koch's theory, but Lewis continued to examine the problem. In April 1886 his name was recommended for election to a Fellowship of the Royal Society, but before the election he had fallen a victim to one of the microbes which he had so assiduously pursued. He died 7 May 1886, and was buried at Netley. He had married, 8 October 1879, Emily Frances (1860 - 1920), daughter of James Brown of Lewisham. His reports are classics in bacteriology. A memorial volume (*In Memoriam*) was published in 1888. His manuscripts are at the National Library (N.L.W. MSS. 14381-401).

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

The National Library of Wales Journal, iii, 65-8

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Timothy Richards Lewis](#)

Additional Links

VIAF: [72159328](#)

Wikidata: [Q3529077](#)

Published date: 1959

Article Copyright: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/> 

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).

