

## POWEL, THOMAS (1845 - 1922), Celtic scholar

**Name:** Thomas Powel  
**Date of birth:** 1845  
**Date of death:** 1922  
**Spouse:** Gwenny Elizabeth Powel (née Jones)  
**Parent:** Elizabeth Powell (née Rowland)  
**Parent:** Thomas Powell  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** Celtic scholar  
**Area of activity:** Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Henry Lewis

Born at Glanirfon, Llanwrtyd, in 1845, son of Thomas Powel of Llanwrtyd and Elizabeth Rowland of Pen-y-bont, Tregaron. He was educated at Llanwrtyd, at Llandovery, and then (1869) at Jesus College, Oxford, where in 1872 he graduated with honours in classics. After having been second master at the Independent College, Taunton, 1878-80, he became headmaster of Bootle College, 1880-3. In 1883 he was appointed assistant lecturer in classics at the newly founded University College, Cardiff and, shortly after that, lecturer in Celtic. In 1884 he became professor of Celtic, a post which he held until his retirement in 1918. He edited *Y Cymmrodor*, 1879-86, and himself contributed to that journal a number of valuable articles on Welsh linguistic points and folk literature, as well as editing a number of mediaeval Welsh texts - in particular, *Ystoria de Carolo Magno* (1883). In 1888 he edited, on behalf of the Society of Cymmrodorion, **Thomas Stephens's** version of *The Gododin of Aneurin Gwawdrydd*. In 1896 he published a facsimile reproduction of **bishop Morgan's** *Psalmau Dafydd*, 1588, with copious notes. In 1890 he married Gwenny Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. Samuel Jones of Neath and Penarth, by whom he had one son.

His friends at Oxford included **Griffith Ellis** of Bootle and **Llywarch Reynolds** of Merthyr. In Cardiff he became a valued member of the Cardiff Library committee and both the city and the college owe him a deep debt of gratitude for enabling them to acquire their valuable collections of literary treasures, both manuscripts and books. From the inception of the National Library of Wales, he was a member of its governing body, and his collection of manuscripts, with many of his rare books, is now in that library. He was a member of the Society for Utilizing the Welsh language and was on the committee appointed by that society to prepare the monograph on *Welsh Orthography* which was published in 1893 (and again in 1905).

Tall, good-looking, and distinguished in appearance, he was an unassuming man of great charm and widely diffused knowledge. He suffered all his life from indifferent health and, as he himself said on many occasions, had to choose between his students and his research. Had he chosen the latter it is quite certain that his contribution to our knowledge of Welsh and Celtic would have covered a wide field and been of the utmost value. He chose, instead, to devote himself to his students, who have every reason to know how fortunate they were. The University of Wales recognized his services to Welsh scholarship by bestowing on him, in 1921, the degree of D.Litt., honoris causa. He died at Aberystwyth 16 May 1922, and was buried in the town cemetery, Friday 19 May.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Henry Lewis**, (1899 - 1968)

### Sources

*Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1922, 173-6

*Y Brython* (Liverpool), 25 May 1922

*Western Mail*, 18 May 1922

personal knowledge

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Thomas Powel](#)

### Images

Hills & Saunders, Thomas Powell

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## Additional Links

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