

PRICE, THOMAS (Carnhuanawc; 1787 - 1848), historian and antiquary

Name: Thomas Price
Pseudonym: Carnhuanawc
Date of birth: 1787
Date of death: 1848
Parent: Mary Price (née Bowen)
Parent: Rice Price
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian and antiquary
Area of activity: History and Culture; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Brinley Rees

Born 2 October 1787 at Pencaerelin in Llanfihangel Bryn Pabuan, Brecknock, the younger son of Rice Price, vicar of Llanwrthyl in that county from 1789 to his death in 1810, and of Mary Bowen of Pencaerelin, the daughter of a vicar. In his home he heard not only the songs and traditions of the peasantry but also the *cywyddau* of **Dafydd ap Gwilym** and occasionally the strains of the harp. He attended various schools in the village and a school at Llanafan vicarage, two miles away. From 1800, when the family removed to Builth, he was for five years at a 'classical school' conducted by the curate of that parish. He early showed his deep love for all that is beautiful and his aptitude for skilled work. In 1805 he entered Brecon grammar school and lodged in the town. Whilst there he was a constant visitor at the home of **Theophilus Jones**, then engaged on the second volume of his *History of Brecknockshire*. The drawings for the illustrations in this volume were largely his work while a letter of 1811 from him to **Jones** concerning Roman remains near Llandrindod was published in *Archaeologia*, xvii. He was ordained deacon on 10 March 1811 and licensed to the curacies of Llan-llyr and Llanfihangel Helygen in Radnorshire; he was priested on 12 September 1812, and in April 1813, moved to Crickhowel to take charge of the parishes of Llangenny, Llanbedr Ystradyw, and Patrishow. To these in 1816 were added the neighbouring parishes of Llangattock and Llanelly. Early in 1825 he received the vicarage of Llanfihangel Cwm-du, augmented in 1839 by the curacy of Tretower. He continued to live at Crickhowel until 1841 when he built himself a house at Cwm-du. He received the rural deanery of the third part of Brecon South in 1832.

A series of articles by Carnhuanawc appeared in *Seren Gomer* in 1824 and he continued to be a frequent contributor to Welsh periodicals down the years. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the provincial eisteddfodau established in the years following 1819. His eloquent speeches were a prominent feature of these gatherings while he won prizes for essays on the early relations of the Armoricians and the Britons (Welshpool, 1824), the history of the Welsh princes (Liverpool, 1840), the comparative worth of the literatures of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland (Abergavenny, 1845), and the Statutes of Rhuddlan (Abergavenny, 1848). He was deeply interested in Celtic antiquities and travelled in Europe in 1825, in Ireland and in Scotland within the following two years, and in Cornwall in 1839. He was largely responsible for making the Welsh and the Bretons aware of their ancient kinship. He learned the Breton language and from 1824 to 1835 he was constantly in correspondence with the Bible Society concerning the translation of the Scriptures into Breton, a task which as early as 1819 he had urged the society to undertake. He examined critically the translation prepared by Le Gonidec, and in 1829 crossed to France with a copy of **Dr. John Davies**'s Latin and Welsh *Dictionary* to facilitate the completion of the work. On this journey he searched the libraries of Brittany and Paris in vain for Welsh or Breton manuscripts. As early as this he was suggesting that a literary society be established so that the Celticists of Britain and of Brittany might interchange ideas and also that a number of Welshmen should cross to Brittany to organize an eisteddfod. His name appears amongst those who assisted in founding the *Cambrian Quarterly Magazine*, 1830.

In 1829 he published *An Essay on the Physiognomy and Physiology of the present Inhabitants of Britain* to counter Pinkerton's views on the origin of races. His greatest work, '*Hanes Cymru a Chenedl y Cymry o'r Cynoesodd hyd at Farwolaeth Llewelyn ap Gruffydd*' (A History of Wales to the Death of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd) appeared in fourteen parts between 1836 and 1842. Though this careful work was marred by a cumbrous Anglicized style and an inadequate conception of the historian's task, no worthier history of Wales appeared for many years. His essay on *The Geographical Progress of Empire and Civilisation*, first published in German in the *Augsburg Gazette*, appeared in English in the *Athenaeum* and again in book form in 1847.

Price was an ardent advocate of the cause of the native language and culture of Wales. About 1820 he founded, at his own expense, a Welsh school at Gelli Felen, while in 1833 he was agitating in the press for the use of Welsh in Sunday and day schools. As rural dean he insisted that the clergy under his jurisdiction should instruct their Welsh parishioners in their native tongue. In 1844 he wrote a series of scathing but unsigned letters to the press condemning the way in which church services were conducted in English for the convenience of a few rich people, and bishoprics and livings conferred on men whose ignorance of Welsh should have disqualified them from holding benefices in Wales. Through his efforts the Welsh Literary Society of Brecon was established in 1823. Soon afterwards he succeeded in establishing the Welsh Minstrelsy Society and for some years obtained sufficient subscriptions to maintain a school for blind harpists at Brecon. Throughout his life he took an intense interest in everything concerning the triple harp. When the Welsh Society of Abergavenny was established in 1833 Price's name was placed first in the list of members as a unanimous token of respect; the society did not survive long after his death. He participated in the work of the Welsh Manuscripts Society, editing the *Iolo Manuscripts* after the death of **Taliesin Williams**. Though he won the esteem and co-operation of the gentry who supported the Welsh societies and eisteddfodau of the period he publicly expressed his admiration for the way in which the common people cherished the national heritage. He was recognized as one of the foremost Celtic scholars of his day and among the numerous people with whom he corresponded were men like **John Jenkins** of Kerry, Le Gonidec, and Hersart de la Villemarqué.

Carnhuanawc was always clad in clothes made entirely of home-produced materials. A remarkably handsome man, he was by nature generous and ingenuous, noble and lovable. He died on 7 November 1848, and was buried at Llanfihangel Cwm-du. A number of his essays were collected in the *Literary Remains* (Llan-doverly, 1854-5), a biography by **Jane Williams** (Ysgafell), appearing as a second volume.

Author

Brinley Rees, (2001)

Sources

Thomas Price, Jane Williams (ed.), *The literary remains of the Rev. Thomas Price, Carnhuanawc, Vol.I; Vol.II*

T. Gwynn Jones in *The Welsh Outlook*, 1923, 38, 70

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NLW Archives: NLW MS 964i-iiE: Thomas Stephens Manuscripts: Letters, A-M

NLW Archives: NLW MS 965i-iiE: Thomas Stephens Manuscripts: Letters, M-W

NLW Archives: NLW MS 3306C: J. T. Jones Manuscripts: 'Hanes y Cyhoeddiadau Misol Cymraeg...'

NLW Archives: NLW MS 6606D: Traherne-Mansel Franklen Manuscripts: Glamorgan 'collectanea' of William Davies

NLW Archives: NLW MS 6598D: Traherne-Mansel Franklen Manuscripts: Letters to J. M. Traherne, &c.

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: Thomas Price

Additional Links

NLW Archives: NLW MS 1464D: Welsh Harp, Harpists, &c.

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