

RICHARDS, THOMAS (1710 - 1790), cleric and lexicographer

Name: Thomas Richards
Date of birth: 1710
Date of death: 1790
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and lexicographer
Area of activity: Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Griffith John Williams

It is not known where he was born but according to the records of the diocese of S. Davids he was ordained deacon in 1733 and priest in 1734. He became curate of S. Ishmaels and Llan-saint in Carmarthenshire, and remained there until 1738. Then, in 1742, he was licensed as perpetual curate of Coychurch (Llangrallo) and Peterston-super-montem in Glamorgan. Afterwards, in 1777, he received the vicariate of Eglwysilan, but he did not reside in that parish; he stayed at Coychurch until his death in 1790. He was twice married - christenings of his children are recorded in the Coychurch parish registers. He published his first book in 1746 - *Creulonderau ac Herlidigaethau Eglwys Rufain*, a translation of a work by Philip Morant. He then proceeded to translate the grammar (1621) and the Welsh-English lexicon (1632) of **Dr. John Davies** of Mallwyd into Welsh, adding to them words which he had seen in the work of **Edward Lhuyd**, in **Wotton's** edition (1730) of the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, and in old vocabularies, besides many Glamorgan dialect words heard by him. This work was published in 1753, another edition appearing in 1759. Thereafter, he added to this dictionary and a prospectus was issued in 1790, a few months before the death of Richards, stating that the work was ready for the press. He collaborated with his neighbour, Dr. John Richards, rector of Coity, in the collection of material for an English-Welsh dictionary; he also revised and corrected the English-Welsh dictionary (1771) of **William Evans** (fl. 1768-76), as is explained on the title-page of the second (1812) edition. He corresponded with **Richard Morris**, and his dictionary was mentioned quite often by the three **Morris** brothers and by **Goronwy Owen**, although the latter was rather critical of the work. Nevertheless, Richards performed useful service. At long last, Welsh literary men who did not understand Latin were given the opportunity to study **Dr. John Davies's** grammar, whilst Richards's dictionary gave them the means of understanding the vocabulary of the *cywyddwyr*. This was a work which was kept close at hand by bards when they wrote *awdlau* and *cywyddau* in the second half of the 18th cent. And he was one of the men who aroused the interest of **Iolo Morganwg** in the literature of Wales, particularly in the vocabulary of the language. By his will, Richards left his books and manuscripts to Edward Thomas, the squire of Tre-groes in the parish of Coychurch. What became of them is not known, but **Iolo** maintained that it was in those manuscripts that he 'discovered' many of his fictions, such as the 'Aberpergwm Brut' and some of the *cywyddau* which he said were written by **Dafydd ap Gwilym**. According to William Thomas's diary, as printed in *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd*, 1949 (48), Richards died 20 March 1790, and was then 80 years of age.

Author

Emeritus Professor Griffith John Williams, (1892 - 1963)

Sources

G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg a Chywyddau'r Ychwanegiad* (1926), 168-9

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 300-9

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Thomas Richards of Coychurch](#)

Works

Thomas Evans and Thomas Richards, *An English and Welch vocabulary, or, An easy guide to the antient British language*(Merthyr 1804)

Thomas Richards, *Antiquā; linguā; Britannicā; thesaurus: being a British, or Welsh-English dictionary*(Bristol 1753)

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