

## THOMAS, EBENEZER (Eben Fardd; 1802 - 1863), schoolmaster and poet

**Name:** Ebenezer Thomas  
**Pseudonym:** Eben Fardd  
**Date of birth:** 1802  
**Date of death:** 1863  
**Spouse:** Mary Thomas (née Williams)  
**Parent:** Catherine Williams (née Prys)  
**Parent:** Thomas Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** schoolmaster and poet  
**Area of activity:** Education; Poetry  
**Author:** Thomas Parry

Born August 1802 at Tan-lan in the parish of Llanarmon, Caernarfonshire, the son of Thomas Williams, a weaver, and Catherine Prys. His parents were faithful members of the Calvinistic Methodist society at Ysgoldy, Pencaenewydd, where the son was received into membership in 1811. He attended schools at Capel Helyg, Llanarmon, Llangybi, Aber-erch and, for a short time, at Tudweiliog in Ll n. He also learnt his father's craft. On the death of his brother William in 1822, Eben took over the school kept by him at Llangybi, and in the same year he resigned from church membership. His interest in poetry had become evident before he was 15 years of age, and he had come to know [Robert ap Gwilym Ddu](#) and [Dewi Wyn](#). His first bardic achievement was at the Powis eisteddfod held at Welshpool in 1824, when he won the prize for his ode, 'Dynystr Jerusalem.' In 1825 he went to keep school at Llanarmon, moving, in 1827, to Clynnog. In 1830 he married Mary Williams, Caerpwsan, Clynnog, and there were four children of the marriage - three daughters and one son. His wife used to bake bread and keep shop, and he himself bound books, in order to augment his earnings as a schoolmaster, and he later became the postmaster. He resumed membership with the Calvinistic Methodists in 1839. His second major eisteddfodic triumph occurred at Liverpool in 1840, when he was awarded the prize for an ode on 'Cystudd, Amynedd, ac Adferiad Iob.' In the following year the two odes, together with some shorter poems, appeared in a volume entitled *Caniadau* (Caernarfon, [James Rees](#)). His school had been housed in the parish church, but in 1843 he moved it to a small building attached to his own house, where it remained till 1845, when it was moved to Ebenezer chapel. In 1849 he was asked to take on a new national school at Clynnog, but as this would entail his becoming a communicant at the parish church, he refused the offer. The Calvinistic Methodist Connexion took an interest in Eben's school, and in 1850 the Arfon presbytery made him an annual grant of £15 (which was later increased to £30) on condition that he taught the children of Calvinistic Methodists free of charge and instructed candidates for the ministry. This arrangement lasted until Eben's death. His poem, 'Yr Atgyfodiad,' sent into the Rhuddlan eisteddfod of 1850, was unsuccessful, but he was given the prize at Llangollen in 1858 for his ode, 'Maes Bosworth.' He was a competitor also at Caernarvon in 1862 on the subject 'Y Flwyddyn,' but was beaten by [Hwfa Môn](#). He died 17 February 1863, and was buried at Clynnog. His wife, his son, and two of his daughters had predeceased him.

Eben Fardd was regarded in his day as one of Wales's foremost poets, and it is fair to say that he was endowed with more of the true poetic sensibility than was any other of the 19th century eisteddfodic bards. He adjudicated often, the most notable occasion being at Aberffraw in 1849, when he was for awarding the prize to [Emrys](#)'s ode on 'Y Greadigaeth,' but was overruled by his two fellow-adjudicators in favour of [Nicander](#). In addition to his well known eisteddfodic poems he wrote a large body of occasional verse, and a collection of hymns by him appeared under the title *Hymnau* (Denbigh, 1862). He prepared an appendix of hymns for the 1856 edition of *Y Salmtydd Cymreig*, edited by [Roger Edwards](#). His contributions to the periodicals of the time were extensive. The ode 'Dynystr Jerusalem' represents the highest achievement of descriptive classicism, while the new standards of the romantic movement appear in the lyrical passages in the ode 'Y Flwyddyn,' and in the Miltonic style of the poem in the free metres 'Yr Atgyfodiad.' Eben Fardd was indeed the focus of much of the literary activity of the first half of the 19th century. His collected works were published under the title *Gweithiau Barddonol Eben Fardd* (in 1873 as it is supposed), edited by [Howell Roberts](#) and William Jones. His antiquarian interest is evinced in the volume entitled *Cyff Beuno* (1863), dealing with the history and tradition of the parish of Clynnog.

## Author

Sir Thomas Parry, (1904 - 1985)

## Sources

*Eben Fardd* ('Cyfres y Fil')

*Y Geninen*, xiv, 91; xix, 240; xx, 58, 100; xxi, 135

*Cymru (O.M.E.)*, iv 29; xxiv, 51; lviii, 9, 52, 93, 133, 149

*Y Traethodydd*, xxxix, 283; xl, 178; 1, 177

*Wales, a National Magazine for the English speaking parts of Wales*, i, ii, iii, passim

*Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru* (1870), p.1097

J. Jones ('Myrddin Fardd'), '[Adgof uwch Anghof.' Llythyrau lluaws o Brif Enwogion Cymru](#) (1883), passim

*Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig* (1889-96) (2nd ed.), ix, 660

*Y Llenor: cylchgrawn chwarterol dan nawdd cymdeithasau Cymraeg y colegau cenedlaethol*, v, 137, 245

*The National Library of Wales Journal*, Winter 1952, 344-6

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Ebenezer Thomas](#)

## Works

Eben Fardd, [Gweithiau barddonol, &c Eben Fardd \(Bangor 1873?\)](#)

David Jones, Owen Thomas, John Parry, [Cofiant y Parchedig John Jones, Talysarn](#) (New York 1868)

## Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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