

WATKINS, THOMAS (17th century), Puritan preacher, Particular Baptist

Name: Thomas Watkins
Gender: Male
Occupation: Puritan preacher, Particular Baptist
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Thomas Richards

The dates of his birth and death are uncertain. He comes into prominence as a messenger to the general meetings organised by [John Miles](#), especially those at Abergavenny and Aberavon, representing the church at the Hay. This church drew its members from a wide area and came to include Olchon, that remote Welsh-speaking valley in south-west Hereford that is often reputed to have been the earliest home of the Welsh Baptists. Under the stresses of the Restoration the Hay church disintegrated, and Watkins (whose home was in that neighbourhood) became recognized as the pastor of the Olchon Baptists, and early in August 1662 he and sixteen others from the parish were summoned to appear before the consistory court at Brecon to answer for their nonconformity. The outstanding event in his career was the journey he made, in company with [William Prichard](#) of Abergavenny, early in July 1668, to Rhydwylym in west Wales, to establish a new Baptist cause there under the leadership of [William Jones](#) (died c. 1700), who had been baptized at Olchon a short time before; though Watkins is sometimes given the credit of being the actual baptizer, the prominence of [Prichard](#) as Baptist leader and the impression made by the words of the Rhydwylym church book, leave little doubt that the Abergavenny pastor was the effective agent of the ordinance accompanied by imposition of hands. Watkins and his people must account for a good proportion of the 220 sectaries counted in 1676 in the parish of Clodock (in which Olchon was situated), but it is disappointing to find, in a document of 1690, that the members of his church were only thirty. In the same document he is described as an aged minister, failing in energy and service, but receiving great help from others, especially from [Thomas Parry](#) (died 1709), minister of Llanigon and Hay. Watkins must have died c. 1695.

Author

Thomas Richards, (1878 - 1962)

Sources

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Salt MS. 2112 in the William Salt Library, Stafford f. 394

Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru, 1948-9, 24

Rhydwylym Church Book (N.L.W.)

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