

## JOHNES, THOMAS (1748 - 1816), landowner and man of letters

**Name:** Thomas Johnes  
**Date of birth:** 1748  
**Date of death:** 1816  
**Spouse:** Jane Johnes (née Johnes)  
**Spouse:** Maria Johnes (née Burgh)  
**Child:** Mariamne Johnes  
**Parent:** Thomas Johnes  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** landowner and man of letters  
**Area of activity:** Land Ownership; Literature and Writing; Nature and Agriculture; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Dafydd Jenkins

Born at Ludlow, 20 August 1748 (O.S.), eldest child of Thomas Johnes (died 1780, M.P. for Radnorshire, 1777-80), a descendant of Sir Thomas Johnes of Abermarlais, nephew of **Sir Rhys ap Thomas**; educated at Shrewsbury, Eton, and Edinburgh University; M.P. for Cardigan Boroughs 1775-80, Radnorshire 1780-96, Cardiganshire 1796-1816; colonel of the Carmarthenshire militia, 1779-98; lord lieutenant of Cardiganshire, 1800-16.

Johnes married (1) 1779, Maria Burgh of Monmouth (died 1782), daughter of the Rev. Henry Burgh, Monmouth, and (2) in 1782, his cousin Jane Johnes of Dolau Cothi, Carmarthenshire (1759 - 1834). In 1783 he settled at Hafod Uchtryd, near Cwmystwyth, Cardiganshire, and devoted himself to improving the estate. A new mansion was built for him by Thomas Baldwin (see *D.N.B.*); this was extended later by **John Nash**. The house was burnt in 1807 but was re-erected later by Baldwin, with many new farm-houses and cottages. A doctor was engaged to attend the poor, a new church was built, and a school for girls opened; but the greatest attention was given to the land. Magnificent gardens were laid out in the demesne, experiments were made in sheep and cattle breeding and the growing of new crops, and trees were planted on land unsuitable for cropping. Johnes obtained the Royal Society of Arts medal five times for planting trees; he encouraged his tenants to improve their farming; he published in 1800 *A Cardiganshire Landlord's Advice to his Tenants*, and a Welsh translation of it by **William Owen Pughe**, and he offered prizes for good crops. He was also one of the chief supporters of the Cardiganshire Agricultural Society, founded in 1784.

Johnes had at Hafod a large collection of works of art, and a library which included many of the manuscripts of **Edward Lhuyd** and many manuscripts and printed editions of the French chronicles of the later Middle Ages. Johnes made a special study of these; in 1801 he published a translation of Ste. Palaye's memoir of Froissart, and between 1803 and 1810 he published from his own press at Hafod his translations of several of the chronicles.

Johnes's son died in infancy but he had hopes of seeing his work at Hafod carried on by his daughter Mariamne (born 1784), but she died during a visit to London in 1811. His health began to fail soon after this, and as he was in financial difficulties he sold the reversion to the Hafod estate (in 1814) and the contents of the mansion, expectant on his life, and took a 'cottage' near Dawlish in Devon as a winter home. He died at this cottage on 23 April 1816.

### Author

Dafydd Jenkins, (1911 - 2012)

### Sources

D. Jenkins, *Thomas Johnes o'r Hafod 1748-1816* (Cardiff 1948), and the sources cited therein

### Further Reading

Thomas Johnes, *A catalogue of the Hafod Library* (Hafod Press 1807)

Wikipedia Article: [Thomas Johnes](#)

### Works

Thomas Johnes, *Memoirs of the life of Sir John Froissart* (Hafod Press 1810)

Thomas Johnes, *The travels of Bertrandon de La Brocquiere, Counsellor & First Esquire-Carver to Philippe Le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, to Palestin* (Hafod Press 1807)

## Images

Francis Engleheart, Thomas Johnes, Esqr. M.P

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VIAF: 62351038

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**Published date:** 1959

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Jenkins, D., (1959). JOHNES, THOMAS (1748 - 1816), landowner and man of letters. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 15 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-JOHN-THO-1748>

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