

## JONES, THOMAS (1648? - 1713), of London and Shrewsbury, almanack maker, bookseller, printer, and publisher

**Name:** Thomas Jones

**Date of birth:** 1648?

**Date of death:** 1713

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** almanack maker, bookseller, printer, and publisher

**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; History and Culture; Printing and Publishing; Scholarship and Languages; Science and Mathematics

**Author:** William Llewelyn Davies

Born at Tre'r Ddôl, near Corwen, possibly on 1 May 1648. At the age of 18 he is said to have gone to London as a tailor; he is afterwards found attending fairs at Chester, Shrewsbury, Wrexham, and Bristol - possibly as a vendor of books. H. R. Plomer (*Dict. of Printers and Booksellers... at work... from 1668 to 1775*) connects his name with *The Character of a Quack Doctor*, 1676. In the autumn of 1679 he issued the first number (for 1680) of the series of thirty-two Welsh almanacks with which he was to be connected up to about 1712; the letters patent granting him the sole right of writing, printing, and publishing an almanack 'in the British Language' are dated 1 January 1679, whilst the assignment to him by the Company of Stationers of the sole right of publishing almanacks for each year 'in the Welsh tongue' was made on the first day of March in the same year. In 1681 he appears to have had a shop in Paul's Alley, London, in 1685 he was settled in Blackfriars, whilst the preface to his Welsh dictionary of 1688 was written at his house near the sign of the Elephant in Lower Moorfields. Three very rare works published by him in London were *Llyfr Plygain*, 1683; *Athrawiaeth i ddysgu ysgrifennu amriw fath ar ddwylo*, 1683, probably the 'first Welsh copybook' (*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, iv, 67, 113); and *Y Gwir er Gwaethed yw*, 1684, a Welsh story, in verse, of the Popish plot (*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, iv, 243); the above three works are represented by unique copies in N.L.W. In 1687-8 he published a Welsh edition of the Book of Common Prayer, a Welsh version of the Thirty-nine Articles, and the metrical psalms of **Edmund Prys**. Another substantial London publication was *Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb*, 1688, a Welsh - English dictionary. By about this time Thomas Jones was working up a substantial business as a bookseller with selling-agents at Chester, Abergavenny, Bala, Dolgellay, Llanfyllin, Oswestry, Welshpool, and Shrewsbury. When he actually settled in Shrewsbury is not definitely known, but some bibliographers believe that *Carolau a Dyriau Duwiol*, 1696 (an anthology based upon Ffoulke Owen's *Cerdd-Lyfr* published in 1686), was issued at Shrewsbury; another fairly early Shrewsbury publication may have been *Artemidorus: Gwir Ddeongliad Breuddwydion* (1698?; there is an imperfect copy in N.L.W.). It is definite that *Attebion i'r Hôll Wâg Escusion*, 1698, and the Welsh version of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, i.e. *Taith y Pererin*, 1699, were printed at Shrewsbury. Jones was busy compiling, printing, and publishing Welsh books and thereby establishing the position of Shrewsbury as a most important centre for the publication and sale of Welsh books. Details as to the various places in Shrewsbury where he lived or worked are given in Llywelyn C. Lloyd's monograph on 'The Book Trade in Shropshire' (in *Trans. Shropsh. Archaeological Society*, xlviii, 1935-36).

The list of publications by Thomas Jones (from London and Shrewsbury) is long and impressive. He was most definitely a benefactor to Welsh literature; even his almanacks had more than an ephemeral interest, for they contained poems, most of them hitherto unpublished, by several of the better-known Welsh poets. Details are given in various volumes of the *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, i, ii, iv; see also **Ifano Jones**, *History of Printing and Printers in Wales*, and **T. Shankland** in *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, 1912-13. Thomas Jones has one other title to fame, for he can be described as the first Welsh journalist. He would appear to have founded the first Welsh newspaper; this is inferred by references in his almanacks for 1691 and 1692 (*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, ii, 99). The venture was unsuccessful and no copy of the work has survived; for the lack of success the publisher blamed Welsh 'mercers' and other vendors for not ordering copies. T. W. Hancock (in *Bye-Gones*, 25 May 1881) said that Jones published a news-sheet (*A Collection of all the Material News, Printed and sold by Thomas Jones in Hill's Lane (?) near Mardol. Price 1d.*), possibly in 1705; if this was the case then Shrewsbury was one of the places where the earliest provincial newspapers were published (Francis Burges's *Norwich Post* began publication in September 1701; see Llewelyn C. Lloyd, op. cit.).

Thomas Jones died 6 August 1713; this date is deduced from a Welsh elegy, 'Marw-nad am yr enwog Sywedydd Thomas Jones yr hwn a fu farw y 6 Dydd o fis Awst 1713'; he is probably the 'Thomas Jones, of ye Castle Hill' who was buried on 8 August 1713 (S. Mary's parish register).

### Author

**Sir William Llewelyn Davies**, (1887 - 1952)

### Sources

To the references quoted in the text add

W. Rowlands, *Cambrian Bibliography* (Llanidloes 1869)

Moses Williams, *Cofrestr o'r holl lyfrau printiedig gan mwyaf a gyfansoddwyd yn yr iaith Gymraeg, neu a gyfieithwyd iddi hyd y flwyddyn 1717* (London 1717)

### Further reading

## Works

Thomas Jones, *An astrological speculation of the late prodigy. Or, A clear discovery of the approaching miseries signified by that comet, or blazing star, which hath so long been visible, to several countries and nations in November, December and January; in the year 1680* (London 1681)

Thomas Jones (ed.), *Y namynun-deugain erthyglau crefydd Eglwys Loegr, neu, Sylwedd ffydd y Protestaniaid*(Llundain 1688)

Thomas Jones, *Carolau a Dyriau Duwiol. Neu goreuon gwaith y prydiddion goreu yng Nghymru*(Amwythig 1696)

Thomas Jones (ed.), *Atcofiad o'r Scrythyr; neu, Holiadau ac atebion: ynghŶ-d a'u profiadau allan o'r Scrythyr Lan*(Y Mwythig 1704)

## Sound and Film

Geraint Jenkins: 'Y Swedydd Chwyslyd': Thomas Jones yr Almanaciwr

## Additional Links

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