

RELLY

There were two brothers of this name, sectaries, from Jeffreston in ' Little England.'

The more famous was JAMES RELLY (1722 - 1778), a farrier, who (as he himself states) was converted by Whitefield on 16 April 1743, and began to exhort around Narberth. In 1747 he itinerated in the west of England, and thereafter his contacts with Wales diminished. He soon left the Whitefieldians, who charged him with Antinomianism, though it would seem that (at any rate at first) his views were rather Quietist - he and his brother for a short while (1750-3) joined **John Harris** 'of S. Kennox ' (1704 - 1763) in forming a small independent sect. Afterwards, James Relly became a ' Universalist,' and moved to London, preaching at first at Coachmakers' Hall, then at Bartholomew Close, and finally (1769-78) at Crosby Square. A foolish woman who had settled an annuity upon him brought a suit against him for the recovery of her money, and thus brought him into considerable ridicule. He died 25 April 1778, when (according to his tombstone in Maze Pond Baptist cemetery) he was 56 years old. To the list of his works given by Alexander Gordon in the *D.N.B.* should be added at least three others, of which N.L.W. has copies: *The Life of Christ*, 1762, *Christian Liberty*, 1775, and *The Ministry of the New Testament* (edition of 1850). James Relly was also a hymn-writer.

His (younger) brother JOHN RELLY (died 1777), does not seem to have been anything like as forceful or as eccentric. In view of James's own statement that he was converted by Whitefield, the Moravian record attributing the conversion of the Rellys to **John Harris of S. Kennox** (in his Methodist days) may perhaps be taken as referring to John Relly only. When James went to London, John Relly remained in charge of the meeting-houses belonging to their sect - Pembroke and Templeton (near Narberth) are the best known of these. He was on the friendliest terms with the Moravians of Haverfordwest; they frequently used his Templeton meeting-house, as their diary testifies (see *Cymm.* xlv, 40), and John Relly preached in the Moravian chapel. It seems, indeed, that he would have been quite willing for his sect to merge into the Brethren's Church, had it not been that the Brethren's polity was episcopal-presbyterian, whereas the Rellites were congregationalist. John Relly, like his brother, wrote hymns. He died 8 April 1777 at Carew; the Moravian minister officiated at the burial. After his death the sect faded away; the Whitefieldians obtained the chapel at Pembroke; for the interesting story of Templeton see the reference above; it is thought that Rellites in other places in Pembrokeshire turned to Independency.

Author

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Sources

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