

50TH YEAR.

# Welsh Tit-Bits.

Neu Wreichion Oddiar yr Eingion

By CADRAWD.

WELSH PRINTERS.

The Welsh Bibliographical Society, which was formed at the last National Eisteddfod, have sent out their first circular, asking all those who are interested in Welsh literature for their assistance and co-operation in the attempt of making a complete record of all printing presses which were established in Wales from the earliest at Trefhedyn, by Isaac Carter in 1719, down to the end of the 18th century. Also the record of Welsh books published outside the Principality, for Welsh books were printed long before the above press was established at Trefhedyn. The list now available, compiled by the late Mr Charles Ashton, which I presume to be the one most complete at present, is given as a guide, and the circular solicits the assistance of their fellow-countrymen, and that every communication on this interesting subject should be made to the secretary, Mr D. R. Phillips, Free Library, Swansea. A glance at the list of Welsh publishers, as it appears in the first issue of the society, makes it quite plain that there is much work to do in this direction, for some very important towns and their celebrated publishers are not given, such as London and Dublin.

The only place where Welsh books had been printed in Glamorganshire previous to the year 1800 is Y Bontfaen (Cowbridge), and the old town on the Thaw, which seems to be much the same now as it was, a hundred and thirty-six years ago, when it issued the first book ever printed in the county, only that the Welsh language is not so freely spoken by the inhabitants.

The history of the Cowbridge Press is very sad reading, and when we realize the amount of cost and anxiety, those who were connected with its establishment had to bear, and if the one at Cowbridge is a fair specimen of the other printing presses established in other towns throughout Wales in the 18th century, we should certainly learn to respect and revere the memory of Welsh printers and publishers, for it was they who laboured, and we who have entered into their labour.

In one of the Welsh magazines may be seen the following note, under a Welsh tune, printed long before ever we had anything like a collection of tunes for the sanctuary :-

"We failed to put in the tenor part of this tune, as it was sent to us, because there were not enough type in the office."

Whatever might be said against the press at the present day, we find in the above instance when it did its level best to serve the age, and we should feel grateful to the good people who have gone before, for much of the blessings we enjoy.

But my intention in commencing this article was to write the history of the first printing press of Glamorgan, and I should suggest that someone in each of the twelve counties (tair-sir-ar-dddeg Cymru) would do likewise.

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## First Printing Press in Glamorgan.

The worry, the annoyances, the disappointments it cost him, for many long and weary years, we shall here endeavour to speak of. Much of the material will be taken from a series of interesting letters which passed between Mr Walters and that patriotic Welshman—to whom we owe mostly the collection and the publication of the "Myfyrian Archælogia." Mr Owain Jones (Myfyr)—a liberal-handed London merchant, to whose energy it is due that the great Dictionary written by Mr Walters, and mostly printed in Cowbridge, was at last brought to completion. How Mr Walters came to devote

ary may be learnt from what he tells us of the matter in the preface of the dictionary. He had acquired either by gift or by purchase the manuscripts of the Reverend William Gambold—the author of the Grammar of the Welsh Language in English. Gambold was a native of Cardiganshire, and was rector of Puncteston and Llanychaer, in Pembrokeshire. Mr Gambold had been working for many years upon a dictionary, and his labours had been talked of, and much had been hoped from them by Welsh scholars. It seemed almost like a national loss that all the labour upon a work so much desired should be thrown away; and Mr Walters hoped that if the MSS. came into his hands, a little editing, and possibly a few additions, would be all that would be required to make them ready for their publication. This proved to be a vain dream. Mr Gambold had not worked systematically, his MSS. had serious blanks in them, and worst than all his scholarship was so defective that much of his prepared work was valueless. In the end, Mr Walters found that the task would have been lighter had he never been burdened with the Gambold MSS. all. The only good effect they had was to turn Mr Walters' attention to that particular study, and to arouse his interest in it. Therefore he determined to go on. This probably took place shortly after his settlement in Llandough.

Towards the end of the year 1769, there came to Cowbridge a printer, a Rees Thomas, who set up a printing press there. Mr Thomas is entitled to honour, and his name will always be held in remembrance, for he was one of the early printers of Wales. He had been in business in Llandovery and Caer-marthen.

He printed the "Seren Foreu, neu Ganwyll y Cymru," at Llandovery in 1770, and having printed the two first parts of the Walters' Dictionary at Cowbridge the same year, we must conclude that it was only part of the press at this time was removed from Llandovery to Cowbridge. On the very first book published at Cowbridge, we are informed that they were printed by R. and T. Thomas; the latter is supposed to be a brother of Rees, though it is not probable that he came to Glamorganshire, but remained at Llandovery. In the preface in the "Canwyll y Cymru," published in Llandovery in 1770, and written also by the publisher (this edition of the work is said to be the fourteenth) he says:

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" iadau yr Awdwr Duw iol hwn gael eu rhoddi  
" i mi i wneuthur y gorau o honynt, ac wrth eu  
" chwilio deallais mai ei bregethau oedd y rhan  
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Rees Thomas, when issuing this edition of the "Canwyll y Cymru," fully intended to publish a volume of his sermons, and we are informed by another source that he took the MSS. with him to Cowbridge for that purpose. These sermons were never published, and to save anybody the trouble of trying to discover these treasures, I may here say that Mr Rees, Tom, was only three months too late to save them. Cartloads of papers, including the old vicar's sermons, had been taken from Mr Walters's residence after his death, to a place called "Waun y Gaer," and burnt as waste papers.

There is only one sermon extant known to have been written by the vicar, and this is published in the late Llandovery edition of "The Welshman's Candle," which is also the fullest and best in every sense.

But to return to the Dictionary, the conditions on which it was to be published are thus printed on the paper cover of Part I :-

"The work to be printed in quarto, with the same letter and paper as this number, and to be published in numbers, each of which is to consist of 12 sheets, at two pence per sheet. The twelve parts issued, which we have seen were published at the following dates:— Parts I and II, 1770; Part III, 1771; Parts IV. and V., 1772; Parts VI. and VII., 1773; Part VIII., 1774; Part IX., 1775; Part X., 1776; Part XI., 1778; Part XII., 1780."

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ESTABLISHED  
OCTOBER, 1857.

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In the first letter of the series, which we are about to quote, bearing date 8th March, 1774, we have some details of the publication, and Mr Walters writes in the hopeful tone of a man who had not much trouble so far with provincial printers. By November of the same year, the scene is not so brilliantly lighted. Rees Thomas is in difficulty, and is in London, looting after a law-suit in which he was involved. His removal from Caer-marthen-shire to Cowbridge prepares one to fear that his affairs were not so flourishing in the former place; and his journeys to London has left him bare of means to carry on the work of the printing office. There is no ink, and as Rees Thomas knew it would be wanted, good Mr Walters is annoyed that he has not sent some down. Meanwhile the publication of Part IX. is declared, and subscribers are kept waiting. Somehow these difficulties are got over as time goes on, and at irregular intervals, but with the inevitable delay, a few more numbers of the Dictionary are issued. At last Mr Rees Thomas's affairs reach a crisis. One morning, in May, 1777, the bailiffs are put in, and an appeal is made to Mr Walters; Mrs Rees Thomas come running to Llandough, with tears in her eyes, to entreat him to come to Cowbridge. He goes, and the goods being appraised, he buys them.

(To be Continued.)

we haven't got the continuation

S. W. W. W.  
W. W. W.  
22/2/06

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"The work to be printed in quarto, with the same letter and paper as this number, and to be published in numbers, each of which is to consist of 12 sheets, at two pence per sheet. The twelve parts issued, which we have seen, were published at the following dates:—Parts I and II, 1770, Part III, 1771; Parts IV. and V., 1772; Parts VI. and VII., 1773; Part VIII., 1774; Part IX., 1775; Part X., 1776; Part XI., 1778; Part XII., 1780."

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In the first letter of the series, which we are about to quote, bearing date 3th March, 1774, we have some details of the publication, and Mr Walters writes in the hopeful tone of a man who had not much trouble so far with provincial printers. By November of the same year, the scene is not so brilliantly lighted. Rees Thomas is in difficulty, and is in London, looting after a law-suit in which he was involved. His removal from Caermarthenshire to Cowbridge prepares one to fear that his affairs were not so flourishing in the former place; and his journeys to London has left him bare of means to carry on the work of the printing office. There is no ink, and as Rees Thomas knew it would be wanted, good Mr Walters is annoyed that he has not sent some down. Meanwhile the publication of Part IX. is declared, and subscribers are kept waiting. Somehow these difficulties are got over as time goes on, and at irregular intervals, but with the inevitable delay, a few more numbers of the Dictionary are issued. At last Mr Rees Thomas's affairs reach a crisis. One morning, in May, 1777, the bailiffs are put in, and an appeal is made to Mr Walters; Mrs Rees Thomas comes running to Llandough, with tears in her eyes, to entreat him to come to Cowbridge. He goes, and the goods being appraised, he buys them.

In our last article we found that the bailiffs had taken possession of the printing press owned by Mr Rees Thomas at Cowbridge in 1777—"blwyddyn y tair caib," as the old people used to call it. In Daniel Walters' Diary (the second son of the Rev. John Walters), which he kept when a boy at school in the year 1777-8, we have the following entry:—

"Tuesday, May 13th, 1777, Mary Lewis called upon us on her way to Cowbridge, whither I went, accompanied by her, my mother, and H. the Bailiff.

"Wednesday, May 14th, to the printer's office to seize the goods, Mrs Thomas, after sending C. backwards and forwards many times, came with tears in her eyes to entreat my father to come to Cowbridge. He went, and the goods being appraised, bought them."

These fragments of a schoolboy's diary were carefully bound up in a small volume, was ex-

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tant in 1880, and copied, but is now lost, having been, as I understand, lent to some one who had forgotten to return it, and probably never will. The story they tell is almost as interesting as if they had been from the daily journal of one of the family of the Vicar of Wakefield. They present a charmingly simple picture of the domestic life of a Welsh county clergyman more than a hundred and thirty years ago.

Henceforth, after Mr Walters had become the owner of the press, we might suppose that the work of printing the dictionary would move forward without a hitch. Not so; eighteen months passes, in which no great progress is made, and Mr Walters finds that much as he has done, he is still expected to do more, and finds his work neglected in the end.

In January, 1779, he thus complains to his friends in London: "I am vexed to tell you how slowly the press goes on with the work, while the printer suffers every insignificant job to break in upon mine, for no other reason that I can assign, but that he is ungrateful, and thinks I must now continue with him tho' he uses me ever so ill. He promises now indeed to go on more expeditiously, and I sincerely assure you that I am, and shall be, very uneasy in my mind till I have it in my power to inform you that the 12th number is published, which I hope will not be many weeks hence. This number will take in part of R." The next letter is dated April 10th, 1779: "No doubt," he says, "you have seen Rees Thomas, the printer, who is in town, to be at the determination of his law suit, which has been so long impending, and there is reason to hope it will be determined in his favour. The press is now going pretty briskly, and I hope it will not be long before you receive the 12th number."

On May 7th he again writes: "Mr Thomas's wearisome law suit, so often on the point of being settled, is still far from being determined, and what is more sad, requires money to carry it on. Some request had been made on his behalf by Mr Owen Jones, to whom this letter is addressed, which Mr Walters could not in prudence comply with. And he there goes on: "Mr Thomas knows the state of my affairs, and that it would be highly imprudent in the embarrassed state of my engagements to risk anything. I shall be obliged to apply to Mr Owen Jones for the small sum in his hands to buy paper, &c., for the Dictionary (12th No.) The press, which had been going briskly, received a short check for want of ink, which is now arrived. I wish Mr Thomas was at home, but wish also that he may bring his affairs in London to successful issue. May God bless you, and remember you, for your unwearied kindness to me."

The twelfth number, so long talked of, last comes out, but three years have to go before No 13 appears. On the 12th August 1782, Mr Walters writes thus to London: "I apologise for the slowness of the publication will be found on the wrapper of the number. It is my misfortune that I am obliged to make so many apologies, as to be in danger of exhausting the patience of disinterested friendship itself." In those good old days of more than a century ago they took matters leisurely; even people as embarrassed in circumstance as poor Rees Thomas did so. It is not in January, 1783, that he bestirs himself for the effort of bringing out No. 14. On the 10th of that month the arrival of the paper for that number is acknowledged, but coupled with the sad confession that: "Alas! Now we are out of ink! It is evident that we cannot go on without the assistance of Mr Jones, and I slowly with it. I must ask the favour of you to get from Mr Blackwell, in Wood's Close a cask of ink, of the value of 15s, and send down by the Swansea coach directed to Mr Rees Thomas, Printer, Cowbridge."

A blank of ten years now occurs in the correspondence, broken by but one letter, which bears date 4th October, 1790. We do not believe that communication between the parties was suspended during this long period, but that the letters for those years have, by accident either been lost, or destroyed. Possibly the letters were not so numerous in these years as in the former, for in this preserved letter Mr Walters alluded to a domestic trouble or affliction which has taken place fifteen months before in his family. The letter is a most sad and mournful one and it will be necessary to our understanding it, that we take a momentary glance at the Walters family. Five sons have been born to Mr Walters—John, Daniel, Henry, William, and Lewis. The two elder boys and William were exceptionally gifted, and the great talents were perfected by carefully directed and assiduous study. The promise of the early life was all that could gladden the heart of a father, particularly a father of scholar tastes. John and Daniel appear each to have earned distinction at Oxford.

Both took orders. John became Fellow of his college (Jesus), and quickly after the headmastership of Cowbridge Grammar School before he was twenty-five years of age. He had resigned this for the better appointment of Ruthin, in North Wales, where he married, and led a very active life. He was succeeded at Cowbridge by his brother Daniel, in 1788. William had not passed by the University, but the promise of his opening powers was even greater than that of his elder brothers. Upon these bright hopes a blight of sorrow suddenly fell, and blotted them out for ever. The three

over.

songs died almost in the space of two years, and the bereaved father was left in a manner, desolate. The two sons spared, were not quick-witted. No wonder then that in the years 1789 and 1790 the pen of the poor old clergyman was laid aside. His letter of September, 1790, to his friend in London is evidently written in reply to that friend's condolence to him. The affliction is not mentioned in any nearer form than as "stroke upon stroke," he himself broken in mind and body—heart broken. Yet a tone of pious resignation pervades it throughout. Time, which assuages all griefs, in a greater or less degree brought some surcease from sorrow to Mr Walters, but the dictionary, which has been, so to say, the work of his life, is still incomplete: age is creeping on—has, indeed, overtaken him, and an effort must be made to finish it.

In spite of his sorrow, in spite of advancing age with its attendant evils, duty to his subscribers bids him resume and conclude the work which he has set before him. So the heart-broken and weary old man once more takes up his task, and in May, 1793, he has the supreme satisfaction of writing to his friend in Upper Thames-street that the last touch had been put to the MS., and to beg his advice regarding the printing and publishing of the remaining numbers.

Counsel was indeed necessary, for poor Rees Thomas, the Cowbridge printer, had passed away from a world where lawsuits and bailiffs had so long plagued him, and had been laid to rest in Llandough Churchyard. "Would it not be advisable," he asks, "to have the printing done in London?" His friend agrees that it would be, and a printer having been engaged, the MS. is sent up on August 2nd, 1793.

But, even in London, printers may be found dilatory, and the poor lexicographer's trials are not yet at an end. May, 1794, arrives, and the subscribers are still waiting for the concluding numbers. In a strain of utter sadness, Mr Walters addresses his correspondent on the subject. There is in this letter a deeper and more pathetic wail than even that cry of the heart wrung from Samuel Johnson when he completed his Dictionary, and wrote his celebrated letter to Lord Chesterfield. Success, or in this case completion of labour with the pleasure or satisfaction arising therefrom, had been delayed until poor Walters could not enjoy it; till he was (in one sad aspect) solitary, and could not impart it; and here the parallel between the two lexicographers ends. Not for him could the lettered ease which attended Dr Johnson's later years, with the homage paid him by the whole world of learning, be hoped for, even if it had been relatively attainable. Imagination

did not picture, neither did the wearied mind and body of this bereaved father desire a calm season of rest to follow the completion of his labours, when the fame so painfully and patiently earned might be enjoyed. No, he writes as one for whom the cares and joys of the world are over; his sole desire is "that the Dictionary may be completed."

"I had hoped," he says, "I should have had an account of the Dictionary being out of the press by this. Upon sending the MS. up to London, I acquainted my friends with the arrangements which had been made, coupled with the assurance that the work would now be completed without further delay. I am quite hurt at the disappointment. I have been confined to my room for three weeks with a severe attack of the old complaint, and was afraid I should not have the satisfaction of seeing the issue of the work, though seemingly so near its completion. Thank God I am recovering."

The work, however, is now in the strong hands of Owen Jones; and its completion, although so long delayed, is assured. No doubt the proofs had the benefit of his revision. By September, 1794, the correspondence over the publication comes to a close: the work has been delivered to the subscribers, and the printer has been paid. Whether Mr Walters derived any pecuniary benefit from the publication is doubtful—indeed, there is more than a suspicion that he was out of pocket.

Thus the Standard Welsh and English Dictionary was brought to its completion. Upon the English lexicographer there attended at the close of his labour sundry rewards and a great access of social consideration. His University hastened to confer upon him the honorary degree of D.C.L.; the Government of the day granted him a (well-merited) pension; and the learned world elevated him to a kind of Literary Dictator. Poor Mr Walters was the object of no such attention or adulation. Ten months before his death he was elected to a Prebendal Stall in the Cathedral Church, of his diocese; and with that modest acknowledgment of his labours the flood of honour reached its highest mark.

Before concluding this notice one more letter deserves attention. It is dated Cowbridge, May 12th, 1797. The poor old gentleman is very ill; he has been suffering from fever for three months. He is seventy-six years old, he says, and feels the weakness of old age. The handwriting of this last letter shows indeed traces of feebleness, but there are still touches of the old stateliness which had been so marked and so uniform a characteristic in all the earlier letters. It was a hand that never seemed to vary; and if handwriting

affords any key to character, then there may assuredly be read in this of Mr Walters' the evidence of a mind large, grand, and calm. It shows us a man whose life was regulated by fixed principles; and who, having decided upon a course to be followed, would pursue that course evenly to the end. In his diction, there is, perhaps, too much of that "rounding of periods," common to the scholarly writers of that time which has, to the year of this our time, a tinge of formality and deprives it of what we are pleased to call "naturalness" of expression. This, however, was the language and style of 1790; and there can be no doubt but that it flowed as freely and easily from his lip and pen; and with as little premeditation as the slipshod English of to-day falls from the lips of so many of our free talkers.

Mr Walters died on the twentieth day after he had penned the letter just referred to, namely, on the 1st of June, 1797. He was buried at Llandough on the 4th of June. His grave is probably in the chancel, but no stone marks the spot where he has been laid. This disregard of the memory of those who have deserved well of their country is but too common in Wales. The grave of a distinguished person is bedewed with tears at his burial, and is strewed with perishable flowers; and with this transient expression of sentiment the public conscience is satisfied. Any warmer patriotism finds an outlet in the vapourings that take place at Eisteddfodau—and so quickly vanishes into thin air. A few of his brother bards laid the tribute of the Welsh Muse (figuratively speaking) upon Mr Walters' tomb—and then the mortuary honours rendered to him by his countrymen ceased.

12/1/07