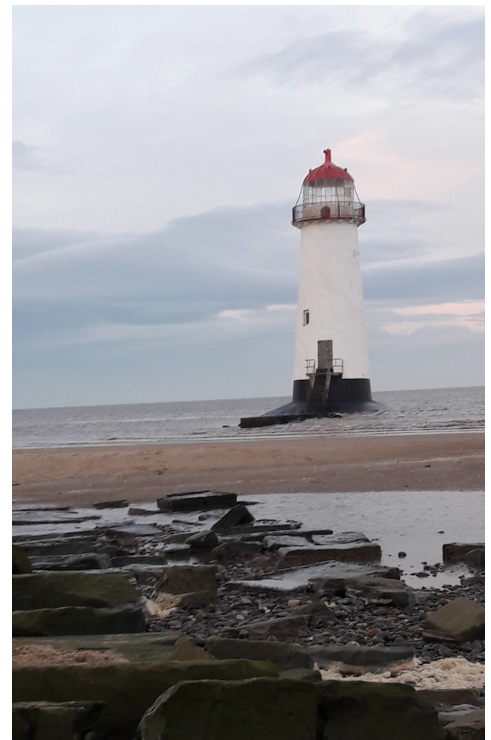


Point of Ayr Lighthouse and the ‘Mormons’

Jill Morgan

Point of Ayr lighthouse is a Grade II listed building near the village of Talacre on the north Wales coast. The oldest lighthouse in Wales, it was de-commissioned in 1883, and replaced by a lightship.

First built in 1776 it stood 59 feet high, and marked the mouth of the Dee estuary and thence to the port of Chester; it also guarded the approaches to the growing port of Liverpool. It was re-built in the early 1800s, having suffered severe storm damage, and is now a tapered cylindrical tower topped with a balcony and metal pile light. Unusually for a lighthouse, it sits on the beach and is at some considerable distance from the sea at low tide.

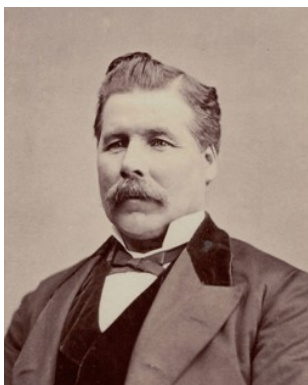


But in the mid nineteenth century the lighthouse had several connections with the ‘Mormons’ – members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.



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Elias Morris (1825-1898) was an early convert to the LDS /'Mormon' church, who noted his conversion and subsequent baptism at Point of Ayr in 1849 with this brief journal entry:



In March 1849 Mr. Jo Parry came to preach to Abergele. My Mother invited him to tea. When I heard of it I was angry at my Mother for welcome such a deluders. But on the 15 I went to listen for myself on Mr John Parry Junr. I beleived his testimony and offered myself a candidate for Baptizem on Saterdag the 17. I went with Mr Parry to New Market. From there to Point of Air light House. There I was Baptized in the sea. Slept at Brother Samuel Brooks were we rejoiced togather that night. Sunday Morning the 18th returned to New Market were there was a small branch of the Church.

The Newmarket referred to here is Trelawnyd, less than 5 miles from Talacre, where John Parry's family lived. Morris was a stone mason by trade and travelled quite extensively through north Wales on different building projects. He quickly became very involved with the newly established LDS congregation in Abergele, and there later in 1849 he helped to build the small stone chapel which still stands in Chapel Street.

Photograph courtesy of <http://welshmormon.byu.edu>

It was also Elias Morris who signed the application in April 1849 to register the building as a place of worship, as required by law at the time.

The former chapel is the small lean-to building, now part of the Bull Hotel. It remains the only known purpose-built LDS chapel in north Wales in the

nineteenth century, and the only one still standing in Wales, as the *Saints Chapel* in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, completed in January 1849, was demolished as part of a road widening scheme in the 1990s. The LDS building erected in Monkton, Pembrokeshire in 1852 has also since been demolished.



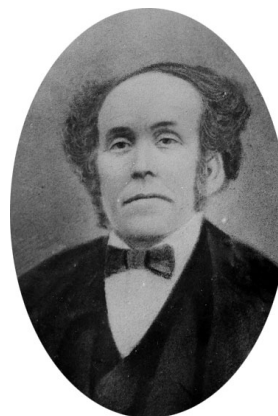
In 1850 Morris was called to travel as a missionary in North Wales, and then emigrated to America in 1852. He married Mary Parry, a local girl, in America; they may well have been engaged to marry before they left Wales. Five of Morris' siblings and his parents had also converted to the LDS church and emigrated. In Utah Territory his masonry skills and experience were much in demand. In addition to working on private homes and municipal buildings he was assigned to work on three LDS temples: in Salt Lake City, and in St George

and Manti in southern Utah. In 1865 he returned to the British Isles as a missionary, and served for four years.

John Parry jnr (1817-1882) referred to by Elias Morris, worked on Point of Ayr lighthouse. He recorded in his journal:

Early that spring (1848) I was sent to Wales to preach. I asked President Orson Pratt if I should work or go without purse or script. He told me that I should have the Spirit of the Lord to direct me as to the best way.

I commenced work as a mason at Point of Air lighthouse in place of my father so that he could go preach, because he was experienced in that. He went through North Wales and had a good deal of opposition, so, some time in the summer he returned home to Liverpool. I met with Eliezer Edwards from South Wales about the middle of that summer, and we both agreed to go out without purse of script. We preached in the principal towns of the six counties of North Wales.



Samuel (1789-1856) and **Emma** (nee Blinstone, 1807-1856) **Brooks** lived in one of the two lighthouse keeper's cottages at Point of Ayr as Samuel was the lighthouse keeper from 1825 to 1856. The cottages were just a short walk through the sand dunes directly south of the lighthouse. Samuel and Emma converted to the LDS faith in 1848 – they may well have been baptised in the pools that formed around the lighthouse as the tide came in – and then emigrated with a large group of Welsh saints aboard the *Samuel Curling* from Liverpool. Unfortunately Emma died in the American midwest. John Parry recorded in his journal:

In the beginning of August, 1856, we started over the plains. We buried Sister Emma Brooks, from Newmarket, the day before we started.

Samuel died 5 October 1856, just days after he and his three children arrived in Salt Lake City. The family had crossed the plains with a handcart company. Of the three children,



Mary Elizabeth Brooks (1839-1919) obtained work as a housekeeper on arriving in the Salt Lake Valley and married the following year, settling in Ogden some forty miles to the north.



Her brother **George** (1845-1930) was taken in by Edward Lloyd Parry and his wife, and moved with them to St. George, in southern Utah. The Parrys had been members of the Newmarket/ Trelawnyd branch, and it was Edward Parry who apparently first introduced the family to the LDS church.

George was evidently trained as a stone mason by Edward Parry. He worked on the St George Tabernacle

and other local buildings, and was a skilled carver of stone. He and his wife brought up a family of twelve children in St George.

Francis “Frank” Brooks (1849-1930) was only six years old when his family left Wales. He had suffered from severe rheumatism since he was 3 or 4 years of age, and therefore had to ride on the handcart, being unable to walk the great distance across the plains. The crippling effects of the arthritis also prevented him from taking on physically hard labour as an adult. After some years of living in the Salt Lake Valley he also moved south to St George, where he lived with his brother George’s family.



Timothy Judd Brooks, a descendant of George Brooks, visited the lighthouse with his family in 2019, and produced a video documenting the visit. It can be viewed on youtube, for which a link can be found in George Brooks’ record (ID: KWJX-H42) on www.familysearch.org.

Point of Ayr lighthouse has had a rich history, withstanding the storms of time, having a reputation for being haunted, and now a tourist attraction in the area. But part of that history is linked to the Morris, Parry and Brooks families, whose descendants still honour their ancestors and the part the lighthouse played in their family history.

Sources for this historical information:

John Parry journal. Available online at: <http://welshmormon.byu.edu/>

Elias Morris journal. Available online at: <http://welshmormon.byu.edu>

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