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THE COWBRIDGE PRINTERS

by

BRIAN LL. JAMES, B.A., A.L.A.

1967

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COWBRIDGE is a small country town, known to most people in Glamorgan as one of the places that one passes through, or more conveniently by-passes, when travelling the A.48 between Cardiff and Swansea. It is a little difficult to realise fully—even for those who know it well—that Cowbridge was for five or six hundred years, until surpassed by the great towns of the nineteenth century, one of the principal towns of the county, one of the four "county towns" for three hundred years. Much of its history, which must therefore be of considerable significance to the history of Glamorgan at large, remains to be written, remains indeed to be investigated. The present essay attempts to bring together a summary of what is known about one small facet of the whole history, beginning in the town's heyday in the eighteenth century, and carrying it through the century of relative decline and stagnation to the new-found prosperity of the present day.

I.

The story of the first printing press at Cowbridge, and the first to be set up in Glamorgan, has been told several times—by Cadrawd, Ifano Jones and, most recently and most exhaustively, by Professor G. J. Williams.¹ In recounting the history once again one treads in the footsteps of the masters; indeed in the paragraphs which follow there is little that is new to add.

The great centre of Welsh printing in the eighteenth century was Carmarthen, where there was a press as early as 1721. It was probably there that Rhys Thomas, the first printer to settle in Cowbridge, learnt his trade, though in fact almost nothing is known

¹ See the bibliographical note at the end of this article.

of his career before the year 1760, by which time he had set up as a master-printer in Lammas Street, and had issued his earliest known booklet, *Golwg y ffyddlonjaid ar degwch a gogoniant Jesu Grist*, a small collection of religious poetry by Dafydd William of Llandeilo Fach. In 1764 he moved his business to Llandovery.

A few years later the Rev. John Walters, Rector of Llandough and Vicar of St. Hilary, near Cowbridge, announced his intention of publishing an English-Welsh dictionary, and asked printers to tender for the job. Almost despairing of getting a Welsh printer to undertake the work, Walters was about to take his manuscript to Bristol when he received an offer from Rhys Thomas at Llandovery. Walters had exacting requirements, the printing of a work of scholarship was no easy matter, and, he added in his letter to Thomas, "Nid rhaid i mi ddywedyd i chwi, mai nid derbyniol yn awr bob Llythyren wrthun a hagr, er pan welwyd cywrein-waith *Caslon a Baskerville*".² Rhys Thomas proved himself equal to the work and, under the careful superintendence of Walters, and with new founts of type, he became one of the best craftsmen in Wales in the eighteenth century. Part of the arrangement between the two men seems to have been that Rhys Thomas would move to Cowbridge. It is not certain exactly when he moved, but it must have been either late in 1769 or early in 1770. He kept on with his original business in Llandovery until 1771, when he handed it over to his partner, his brother Daniel.

From some research on the land tax assessments for the period 1784-1831 and the tithe map and apportionment for the parish of Cowbridge (1841-4), all of which are preserved in the Glamorgan Record Office, it appears very likely that the premises occupied by Rhys Thomas were those now known as 70 Eastgate, a few doors away from the printing shop of Messrs. D. Brown and Sons Ltd. at the present day. This building has perhaps changed little since Rhys Thomas' day, for it wears an eighteenth century aspect, as do many houses along the main street, reminders of the time when Cowbridge was one of the leading towns of Glamorgan. About the time of the establishing of the printing office it was a place of some 700 inhabitants, "a remarkably plentiful Market Town" with "a long-established very reputable Free-School, and an exceedingly polite

² I need not tell you that, since the fine workmanship of Caslon and Baskerville was seen, not every odious and ugly letter [i.e. type face] is now acceptable.

A
DISSERTATION

ON THE

Welsh Language,

Pointing out it's

ANTIQUITY, COPIOUSNESS,

GRAMMATICAL PERFECTION,

WITH

REMARKS ON it's POETRY;

AND

Other Articles not foreign to the Subject.

By JOHN WALTERS,
Rector of LANDOUGH, Glamorgan-shire.

----- *Antiquam exquirite Matrem.*

VIRG.

C O W B R I D G E :

Printed for the Author, by R. and D. Thomas,

M,DCC,LXXI.

Edward Williams, jun.

MARBLE-MASON,

A T

Flimston, near Cowbridge ;

MAKES all Sorts of *Chimney-pieces, Monuments, Tombs, Head-stones,* and every other Article in the **MARBLE** and **FREESTONE-MASONRY**, in the newest and neatest Manner, and on the most reasonable Terms.

As he has for many Years regularly followed this Trade in *LONDON* and other capital Towns under the best Masters, he hopes he will be found capable of executing any of the above Articles to the Satisfaction of all who may be pleased to honour him with their Commnds. and on cheaper Terms than those who profess the Trade without ever having followed it where any tolerable Knowledge of it could be acquired.

As there are various Sorts of good *Marble* found in many Parts of *GLAMORGAN*, *Monuments, Tables, Chimney pieces, &c.* of it may be had very cheap.

Marble Tables, Chimney pieces, &c. clean'd and new polish'd on reasonable Terms ; also Letters cut on old *Monuments, or Tombs.*

Orders directed to him at *Flimston*, or at the *Printing Office*, or to *Mr. Bradley*, at the *Horse and Jockey*, in *Cowbridge*, will be duly attended to.

R. THOMAS, PRINTER, COWBRIDGE, 1770.

An advertisement setting forth Iolo Morganwg's merits and qualifications as a "marble-mason"

By permission of the National Library of Wales

H A L S I N G,

Neu G A N newydd ar

DDYDD NATALIC.

Gan JOHN WILLIAMS, o St. Athan.
Ym Morganwg.

ESAY ix. 6.

*Canys Bachgen a aned i ni, Mab a roddwyd i ni,
a bydd y llywodraeth ar ei ysgwydd ef.--*



PONTFAEN: Argraphwyd gan R. Tomas, lle
gellir cael argraphu pob rhyw Gopiau, a
beindio yn lân, am bris gweddaidd.
1781.



Tapping out this volume of *Glamorgan Historian* on a Monotype keyboard, the first stage in book production, at Brown's of Cowbridge

Neil Brown (standing) and Alan Brown, principals of the Cowbridge firm of printers



Heidelberg cylinder printing machines at Brown's

and social neighbourhood". Allowing for the over-statement of this description from an advertisement in the *Glocester Journal*, one begins to get a picture of the Cowbridge of 1770. The annual races on the Stalling Down and the meetings of Great and Quarter Sessions made it a centre for the local gentry, some of whom maintained town houses which still grace the High Street. It was also the educational, and indeed the intellectual, centre of the Vale of Glamorgan, with its grammar school, the diocesan library founded by the S.P.C.K. and the Book Society connected with it.

The advent of Rhys Thomas and his printing press began a new phase in the intellectual history of the town, since it would now become a focal point of Welsh culture and learning, which were subjects of small concern to polite society, and to the men learned in the classics and in theology for whom the library was intended. The link between the two was John Walters himself. He was a prominent member of the Book Society and librarian from 1790 to his death. He was probably the best scholar amongst them, yet not a university man, and his chief interest lay in the study of the language and literature of Wales.

Walters' *Dictionary*³ was one of the major scholarly productions of the period in Wales, and one of the largest books published in Wales in the eighteenth century. Although it owed something to the work of various predecessors, especially William Gambold of Puncteston in Pembrokeshire, Walters must be regarded as the author of an essentially original work. He spared no pains to make his *Dictionary* as comprehensive and correct as possible. To this end he consulted as many books and literary manuscripts as were available to him, including those in the possession of the printer, who had acquired some papers of the seventeenth century religious poet, Rhys Prichard of Llandoverly, and who was able to borrow various manuscripts from his acquaintances in Carmarthenshire. One of Walters' chief concerns was to demonstrate what he called the "copiousness" of the Welsh language, by which he meant the richness of its vocabulary and the ease with which new words could be coined without borrowing from other languages. The extent to which he created new words, and developed the meanings of existing ones, is

³ The full title of the work was: *An English-Welsh dictionary; wherein not only the words, but also the idioms and phraseology of the English language, are carefully translated into Welsh, by proper and equivalent words and phrases, &c.*

gradually being revealed by the publication of *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*; many of these have entered the vocabulary of the language and are in frequent use—words such as “amaethyddiaeth” (agriculture), “beirniadaeth” (criticism), “diweddar” (to modernise), etc., etc. Other words, such as “dynfwytawr” (cannibal), have not become accepted. Walters was greatly assisted in his labours by an enthusiastic young man from the neighbouring parish of Flemingston, then just starting out upon his strange career as scholar and romantic poet—Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg).

Iolo's connection with the Cowbridge printing-office was a close one, partly on account of his friendship with John Walters and his family. In 1772 Rhys Thomas printed Iolo's first publication, *Dagrau yr awen*, a “marwnad” or elegy on the death of his bardic teacher, Lewis Hopkin of Llandyfodwg. About the same time Thomas also printed “proposals” for publishing “Select Pieces of Ancient Welsh-Poetry”, but this book, as so many projected by the Bard, never saw the light of day, despite his having persuaded a number of persons to subscribe towards it. And in 1779 was printed an advertisement setting forth Iolo Morganwg's merits and qualifications as a “marble-mason”.

Another local poet whose work was printed by Rhys Thomas was John Williams, one of Iolo's close friends, and a friend also of the printer's. John Williams is remembered as the author of the hymn “Pwy welaf o Edom yn dod”, and as the subject of the remarkable elegy by Thomas William of Bethesda'r Fro, “Daeth cerbyd Israel, daeth . . .”

Also among this small literary circle that gathered around the printing office one should not forget the importance of the printer, Rhys Thomas, himself. There is no doubt that he was something of a scholar, as were many of the Welsh printers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His services to Walters in the compiling of the *Dictionary* have already been mentioned, and he himself made good use of manuscripts which he had acquired in publishing a much more complete edition of the poems of the Vicar of Llandovery than had appeared hitherto.⁴

⁴ *Y seren foreu, neu Ganwyll y Cymry* (Llandovery, 1770-1). “The Welshmen's candle” was written in the first half of the seventeenth century by the Vicar for the instruction of his flock; the poems were first published after his death between 1659 and 1672.

Against this background the course of the history of the printing office during the twenty years of its existence at Cowbridge can now be related. For the first few years affairs seem to have proceeded smoothly. The first instalment of the *Dictionary* was published at Cowbridge on 5 April 1770,⁵ at two shillings. Up to the appearance of the eighth part on 28 March 1774 publication seems to have been reasonably regular and speedy, and Rhys Thomas had printed in addition a considerable number of smaller items, of which eight (excluding handbills and broadsheets) are known. Most of these books are very rare, so it is not unlikely that others were printed of which no copies have survived. A glance at the list of the recorded items gives a very fair idea of the range of literature published in Wales in the period. Three of the publications were poems written on the deaths of religious leaders; another was Iolo Morganwg's elegy upon Lewis Hopkin; two more were sermons. Another item was a translation from English, a slight pamphlet entitled *Y pererin cwsg, sef breuddwyd neu weledigaeth Ioan Bray*,⁶ to which some interest attaches because a spare page was used to announce a forthcoming meeting of a society of poets at the sign of the Swan in Llantrisant. The remaining item is a more substantial booklet by John Walters, *A dissertation on the Welsh language*, a sort of preface to his *Dictionary*. Although his notions on philology seem highly curious today, it is quite evident from this book that this obscure country clergyman was familiar with all the learned writers on his subject. The *Dissertation* also shows Rhys Thomas' printing at its best.

From 1774 onwards the clouds gathered over the printing office and over the rectory at Llandough. Difficulties increased. The publication of the *Dictionary* was slowed down to one part in each of the years 1774, 1775 and 1776, and a part in every second year, in 1778, 1780 and 1782. Part XIV was published probably in 1783, bringing the work down to the word "stain", and page 1,344. In this period of ten years (1774-1783) only seven other items from the press are extant. One of these, perhaps the most interesting, is a

⁵ It seems, however, that some of this first part of the *Dictionary* may have been printed at Llandovery, before Rhys Thomas moved to Cowbridge.

⁶ "The sleeping pilgrim; that is, the dream or vision of John Bray". The late Idwal Lewis published a note about this booklet in *The National Library of Wales Journal*, XIV, p. 252. See also G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg*, p. 127.

catalogue of the furniture of John Edmondes offered for sale by auction "at his late dwelling-house at Cowbridge"⁷ in 1778. Another item is the only one known to bear the imprint "the Glamorgan-press". It is clear that in this period Rhys Thomas was printing a number of non-literary pamphlets. It is not unlikely that such work as the printing of hand-bills and sale catalogues, and the occasional notice by order of the Quarter Sessions, in fact was the mainstay of his business. Doubtless much of this ephemeral material has been lost. One pamphlet deserves separate mention, if only because it does not actually carry Rhys' name on its title-page. *A calm address to the independent resident gentlemen, clergy and freeholders of the county of Glamorgan* is an anonymous pamphlet "printed in the year M,DCC,LXXX", almost certainly, from the style and workmanship, at the Cowbridge office. It is far from calm. The author makes a scurrilous attack upon the character of Charles Edwin, the owner of the Llanmihangel and Dunraven estates, who was being proposed by some of the great absentee landlords of Glamorgan as their candidate in a parliamentary election. Presumably Rhys Thomas thought it wiser not to display his name on the pamphlet, though there can hardly have been any doubt at the time about who had printed it, since he was the only well-established printer in the county.⁸

One can follow the difficulties which affected the output of the press at Cowbridge from a series of letters which passed between John Walters and Owen Jones (Owain Myfyr), the London Welshman who, in 1774, began to distribute the parts of the *Dictionary* in and around London. These letters are preserved in the British Museum and the National Library of Wales. As we have seen, Part VIII appeared in March 1774, and Part IX should have been ready towards the end of the year, but, Walters wrote to Owain Myfyr, "the ink at the Office hath run short, and I am amazed that Thomas, the Printer, who is either now in London, or on his journey homewards has not sent down some, as he promised to do immediately upon his

⁷ The house is almost certainly Old Hall. The catalogue is among the papers of the Turbervills of Ewenny, on deposit in the Glamorgan Record Office.

⁸ The first printing press at Swansea dates from about 1780, and by the end of the century Swansea was the chief centre for printing in Glamorgan. But up to 1780 Rhys Thomas was still the only printer in the county, and indeed the only experienced craftsman in South Wales outside Carmarthen, Trefeca and, perhaps, Brecon. The next town in Glamorgan to have a press was Cardiff, in 1791, and then Merthyr, in 1801.

arrival in Town". Rhys Thomas was more concerned about a law-suit in which he was involved for some years; in January 1777 Walters again complained that the printer was up in London. The Rector's finances also were straitened, as he announced to his subscribers on the paper wrapper of Part X, apologising for "the tediousness of publication". And then in May 1777 Rhys Thomas' affairs reached their first major crisis. The bailiffs were in the printing office. Daniel Walters, the 15-year old son of the Rev. John Walters, wrote in his diary on 14 May, "To the Printer's office to seize the Goods. Mrs. Thomas, after sending C[aleb] 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". It is assumed that the printing press itself was among "the Goods" which Walters was obliged to buy, but this led to no improvement in the publishing of his *Dictionary*. His letters to Owain Myfyr get more bitter, as he denounces "musgrelli ac annibendod y cyssodydd a'r argraphydd" (20 January 1778), and refers to his "burden"—"baich fy ngorchwyll anhydwyth".⁹ Meanwhile Rhys Thomas' law-suit in London still dragged on through 1778 and 1779, and the work of printing Part XII dragged on wearily as the printer "suffers every insignificant job to break in upon mine for no reason that I can assign but that he is ungrateful" (29 January 1779). In this same letter, though, John Walters could report the consoling news to his friend that the names of Dr. Charles Burney, Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Samuel Johnson himself had been added to the list of subscribers. Part XII eventually appeared, after much effort, in 1780, and the subscribers had to wait two more years for the next instalment; part XIV followed more quickly, but this proved to be the last to be printed at Cowbridge, for towards the end of 1783 Rhys Thomas' affairs reached their ultimate crisis. The next piece of evidence is a letter written by him to his patron on 22 November "o'r Carchar-dy cyffredin, Caerdaf", from the common gaol, Cardiff. He had been trying to obtain a suitable substitute for himself who could both compose and handle the press, but such a man was not to be found, even in Bristol. He was in prison for debt, as one may learn from the mocking verses

⁹ The writer complains about the slowness or indolence of the printer and compositor and about their lack of method. (The words which he uses are difficult to translate exactly). He refers to the "burden of my unyielding task".

of his assistant, Siôn Morgan, who had not been paid his wages,

“Ag yno boed ei drigfa
Nes talo'r ffyrlling eitha.”¹⁰

John Walters' solution to the difficulty was to summon home his son Henry, then 17 years of age. At the beginning of the same year Henry had been placed in the care of Robert Raikes of Gloucester, publisher of the *Gloucester Journal* and famous as the founder of the Sunday School movement in England. He can hardly have learnt the printer's craft very thoroughly in the few months he stayed at Gloucester, but he came back to Cowbridge in November 1783 and set up in business as a printer and bookseller. In the following March, Henry printed a handbill, respectfully informing “the gentlemen of this county, &c . . . that Printing in general is executed with neatness, care, and dispatch, at the Printing-Office, in this Town, on the most reasonable Terms, by their most humble Servant . . .”

However, Henry Walters, with the somewhat doubtful advantage of the assistance of Siôn Morgan, was not equal, either by training or by temperament, to the task of running a business. He moved his premises in 1784 or 1785 to Ballard's Court, higher up the town.¹¹ Here he lived for the rest of his life, alone after the death of his mother in 1805, growing gradually more eccentric. He became known as the “Cowbridge Hermit”, one of the sights of the district, living in filth amidst the remains of his father's library of books and manuscripts, and what was left of his abandoned bookshop. After his death in 1829 these books and papers, which included Vicar Prichard's MSS., were carted away and destroyed.

Only four minor items are known to have been printed by Henry Walters. In 1791 the press was sold to John Bird of Cardiff “for the trifling sum of Seventeen Guineas”. Rhys Thomas had been buried at Llandough in the previous year.

Thus ended the first chapter of the history of printing in Cowbridge. But the great *English-Welsh Dictionary* had reached only the word “stain”. John Walters was now an old man, in declining

¹⁰ “And there let his dwelling place be, until he pays the last farthing”. Siôn's verses, and a reply to them by John Williams of St. Athan taking him to task for being a drunkard and for rejoicing in an old friend's misfortune, will be found among Iolo Morganwg's papers in the National Library (NLW 13, 160A, pp. 213-6).

¹¹ Ballard's Court, is entered between 52 and 54, High Street.

health, and the loss of three of his most able sons as very young men in 1787-9 had almost made him throw up his burdensome task. Nothing was printed for ten years, and then, in 1794, Owain Myfyr came to the rescue of the *Dictionary*. At his own expense he had the remainder printed in London for £86 16s. 6d. So after a quarter of a century the work was complete. The author died in 1797 and was buried at Llandough, though there is no monument or tombstone there to commemorate him.

II.

From the time of the sale of the printing press and its removal to Cardiff in 1791, there was a period of nearly half a century during which no printer is known to have exercised his craft at Cowbridge. There were booksellers¹² in the town more or less throughout the period, and the local clergy continued to support a book club, though the old diocesan library had fallen into disuse and decay in its room adjoining the chancel of the parish church. In 1831 some of the prominent men in the town and neighbourhood started a society for the improvement of the working population in the county of Glamorgan. The ambitious aims of this society included the founding of savings banks, friendly societies, circulating libraries and infant schools, all fashionable methods of raising the condition of the labouring classes. It does not seem that much was actually achieved by the society, but it deserves its mention here on account of the *Cowbridge tracts*. Twelve pamphlets were published, most of them from the pen of Benjamin Heath Malkin, the chairman of the society who had recently come to live in Cowbridge, to explain to the poor man the middle class view of his social and economic position. In the absence of a printer working in the town itself, the tracts were printed by William Bird of Cardiff.

Although there is still ample evidence of a vigorous social and cultural life at various levels of society, by the 1830's Cowbridge had ceased to be one of the most important towns in Glamorgan. The population had risen to more than 1,000 by 1821, but thereafter it remained almost static for forty years. The primacy of Bridgend in mid-Glamorgan was made possible by improvements to the main

¹² Iolo Morganwg kept a bookshop in Cowbridge in 1795-6.

road from Cardiff to Swansea, and was confirmed when the railway between those two places, opened in 1850, avoided Cowbridge altogether. In the very same year the Quarter Sessions were held at Cowbridge for the last time. It was then no more than a very small market town, under the control of the local gentry and a few resident professional families, while the life of the county of Glamorgan flowed with increasing pace through the new industrial districts and the ports.

Against this background it is rather curious that, in July 1838, Josiah Thomas Jones should choose to move his printing and publishing business from the bustle of Merthyr Tydfil to bucolic Cowbridge. It has been said that he was obliged to leave Merthyr because of the ironmasters' opposition to his radicalism—but Cowbridge seems an unlikely place of refuge for a radical. It is not surprising that after little more than two years Josiah moved on to Carmarthen, still one of the major towns of South Wales at this time. But in this short period his output of books and periodicals was quite phenomenal. One has to remember that in the fifty years which separated Josiah Thomas Jones from Rhys Thomas, the Welsh reading public had greatly increased in size, and there was now a ready market, it appears, for all manner of literature, in both languages. It is also important to add that major technical advances had made printing a great deal cheaper and speedier than it had been in the old days of the hand press.

Josiah Thomas Jones was born in the parish of Clydau, Pembrokeshire, in 1799. He began to preach at Llwyn-yr-hwrdd Independent Chapel in his native parish at an early age, and eventually was ordained to a pastorate at Caernarvon. He had no great success as a minister since his whole interest was evidently in his numerous literary activities and publishing ventures. From 1832 to 1836 he had a printing press in Caernarvon, and from 1836 to 1838 he was in Merthyr, where he printed two short-lived English newspapers which put forward radical views. In January 1838 Josiah began publishing *Y Gwron Cymreig*, which continued to appear after his removal to Cowbridge. It was a monthly magazine, though in newspaper format. Since it is the nearest to a newspaper that has ever been published in Cowbridge it is worth pausing to describe its character. In the first place it was not intended as a local paper, as its full title read *Y Gwron Cymreig a chyhoeddwr*

cyffredinol i Dywysogaeth Cymru.¹³ In the editorial of the December 1838 number the publisher set forth a statement of policy. The *Gwron* was intended to provide the monoglot Welshman with the means of informing himself on current affairs, general knowledge and literary subjects, such as no other Welsh periodical of the day provided. Its contemporaries were largely, but not entirely, devoted to religious matters. The paper gave much space to the activities of Welsh societies and the Oddfellows, and after the move to Cowbridge the literary productions of the local *Cymreigyddion* occupied a very prominent place. The paper probably ceased publication with the twenty-fourth issue, in December 1839, and was then replaced by a much smaller magazine given over entirely to the affairs of the Oddfellows, *Y Gwron Odyddol*, four numbers of which are known to have been printed. Also, from November 1838 to April 1839, Josiah published four numbers of a religious periodical entitled *Trysorfa grefyddol Gymreig*.

Apart from these ambitious, but not especially successful, attempts at serial publication, Josiah Thomas Jones printed and published a miscellany of books and pamphlets. A few titles will give some idea of the variety, some learned, some useful, some trivial. In 1838 he printed a sermon by Edward Matthews of Pen-llin (of Ewenny in later years), and *A duoglott guide for making temperance drinks*. In 1839 appeared the final part of *Geiriadur duwinyddol*, by the Rev. William Jones of Bridgend—a theological dictionary of considerable proportions, a work which was highly valued by the next generation of Welsh preachers. But in the same year also appeared T. J. Ll. Prichard's book, *The adventures and vagaries of Twm Shon Catty*, and *Howell's farriery. The whole art of farriery laid open*, together with *Perllan Gwent*, a volume of the verses of the local bard, Iolo Fardd Glas. In *The life of Henry Jenkins*, published in both languages, was contained a curious collection of old medical recipes, which would doubtless have appealed to this age of patent medicines and quack doctors. A number of other titles are known, and there is no doubt that others remain to be discovered.

Among those who worked for J. T. Jones were two minor literary figures, James Davies (Iago ap Dewi), and William Ellis

¹³ The literal translation of the title is: "The Welsh hero, and general announcer for the Principality of Wales".

Jones (Cawrdaf). For a time Cawrdaf was editor of *Y Gwron Cymreig*. On 22 March 1839 ("Alban Eilir", or the vernal equinox), Cawrdaf and Iolo Fardd Glas, who had both been installed as bards by Iolo Morganwg himself, held a session of the Gorsedd of Bards within a circle of thirteen small stones on Tyle Rosser, overlooking the town. There they admitted a long list of candidates into the three bardic orders, among them the printer, with the appropriate title *Gwron*, and three Glamorgan poets, well-known in later years, Myfyr Morganwg, Dewi Haran and Alaw Goch. On the previous day the Cowbridge Cymreigyddion had held their annual eisteddfod in the town hall, a decorous occasion presided over by William Williams, the squire of Aberpergwm. Josiah Jones gave one of the prizes, Cawrdaf was prominent among the successful competitors and the whole proceedings were reported at great length in the columns of *Y Gwron*.

J. T. Jones moved from Cowbridge towards the end of 1840, bringing to a close the second period when a printing office at Cowbridge and its staff were making a significant contribution both to publishing in Wales and to local cultural life.

The next printer to work in Cowbridge, David Davis, has no claim to any particular fame. He was a native of Cardiganshire, who had lived in Glamorgan for many years, and about 1840 he opened a shop as a bookseller and stationer.¹⁴ There is no evidence that he had a printing press before 1845, and it is quite clear that it was never more than a subsidiary part of his business. A few slight pamphlets were printed by him, all of them of purely local interest.¹⁵ The business was carried on by his son, Ebenezer, down to about 1885. In 1873 Ebenezer Davis edited, printed and published a monthly magazine called *The Glamorgan observer*, which contained serial stories and local reports, mostly in English. The publication appeared at a loss right from the first issue, and after the eleventh it was discontinued. Apart from this rather ambitious venture the Davises were the ordinary commercial printers of a small country town.

¹⁴ He seems to have lived first at 33 High Street. By 1851 he had moved to 43 High Street, now Arthur John's, the ironmonger. From the 1870's down to about the first World War, Davis' daughter, Ann, had a stationer's shop at 70 Eastgate, where Rhys Thomas is thought to have had his printing press.

¹⁵ The most important is *Antiquarian researches . . . respecting the principal families of Glamorgan*, by Christopher Bassett, two parts only of which were published in 1845-6.

III.

By the late nineteenth century there were many printers working in all the towns of Glamorgan. Even the comparatively small town of Bridgend had become the place of publication of two weekly newspapers, the *Central Glamorgan Gazette* (1866), and the *Bridgend Chronicle* (1880), which were amalgamated in 1894 to become the *Glamorgan Gazette*. The printer of this paper was one Joseph Gibbs. Because of some disagreement with the proprietors of the *Gazette*, Gibbs, with a young associate David Brown, moved to Cowbridge in 1895 to set up business on his own account. To begin with they occupied premises in 43 High Street, but they soon moved into a new building in Town Hall Square. There they carried on business as Gibbs & Brown for some twenty years until they moved to the present site in Eastgate. The firm became D. Brown and Sons Ltd. in 1929.

The introduction of mechanical type-setting in 1930 enabled "Browns" to take on larger and more elaborate work than they had done hitherto—work such as guide books, catalogues, time-tables and electoral registers. In recent years they have also widened their horizons by printing brochures in German, Spanish, French and the Scandinavian languages. Another development has been their entry into the field of book production. Success in this direction has been closely related to the two series of books edited and published by Stewart Williams. The present volume is the eighth in the sequence which began in 1959 with *History on my doorstep*, and the fourth in the *Glamorgan Historian* series. The University of Wales Press Board now make substantial use of the firm's services to print their scholarly books and periodicals, Welsh and English, including such technical achievements as Harold Carter's *The towns of Wales* (1965). About thirty people are now employed in what is virtually the only industry within the borough of Cowbridge.

It is good to be able to record that, almost two hundred years after the first establishment of a press in the town, a printer here is once again playing an important part in the production of books in Wales.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The late Professor G. J. Williams dealt exhaustively with the eighteenth century phase of printing at Cowbridge in his biography of Iolo Morganwg (Cardiff, 1956), especially pp. 32-3, 135-147 and 391-411. The present article has drawn very freely upon Professor Williams' work. The earlier accounts are: "John Walters and the first printing press in Glamorganshire", by Cadrawd, which appeared in the first volume of the *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society* in 1911. Ifano Jones' account occurs in his monumental work, *A history of printing and printers in Wales to 1810* (Cardiff, 1925), pp. 84-92. The latter account is still indispensable.

Other useful material has been found in the Rev. Dr. Hopkin-James' book *Old Cowbridge* (Cardiff, 1922), and in the Rev. E. O. T. Lewis' article, "The Cowbridge Diocesan Library, 1711-1848", which was published in the *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales*, IV (1954) and VII (1957). On the nineteenth century the chief sources are G. J. Williams, "Cyhoeddi llyfrau Cymraeg yn y 19 ganrif", *J.W.B.S.*, IX (1965); and R. D. Rees, "South Wales and Monmouthshire newspapers under the Stamp Acts", *Welsh History Review*, I (1962). There are useful accounts of most of the people mentioned in the present article in *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*.

Almost all the books and periodicals printed and published in Cowbridge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are extremely rare, and in several cases only single copies seem to be extant. The most important collections are preserved in the National Library of Wales and in Cardiff Central Library. The latter library is fortunate to possess a set of the first twelve parts of Walters' *Dictionary* in their original wrappers. This is almost certainly unique.

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