

Lewis Thomas

Ym 1859 ymfudodd Lewis Thomas, a fagwyd yn dlawd mewn bwthyn bychan tu ôl i gapel Bethel, i Awstralia. Bu'n gweithio yn Ffatri Ceulan nes iddo adael am Awstralia ar ôl priodi Anne Morris, chwaer y perchennog, Richard Morris. Wedi glanio yn Melbourne gweithiodd ei ffordd, dan amgylchiadau anodd, i dalaith Queensland ac, yno, suddodd byllau glo a'u galw yn Aberdare ac EbbwVale. Fel rhai o feistri glo Cymru daeth yn filiwnydd ond aeth pedair blynedd ar bymtheg heibio cyn iddo fedru perswadio ei wraig, Anne, i ddod ato i Awstralia. Ganwyd un ferch, Mary, iddynt. Defnyddiodd beth o'i gyfoeth i adeiladu plasdy ar ben bryn heb fod ymhell o dref Ipswich a'i alw yn Brynhyfryd.

Cymerai ddiddordeb mawr yn hynt a helynt ei gymdeithas a gwasanaethodd hi fel Aelod Seneddol yn Queensland. Sefydlodd eisteddfod lwyddiannus hefyd yn Queensland. Rhoddodd dir ac arian i adeiladu capel i gynnal eglwys unedig yn Blackstone, canolbwynt y bywyd Cymreig. Un o weinidogion yr eglwys oedd un o'r enw Rhys Jones a ymddeolodd i Dre Taliesin. Adeiladodd yno fyngalo pren iddo ei hunan a'i alw yn Brynhyfryd! Cyflwynodd Cymry'r ardal gadair wedi ei cherfio gan grefftwr, Evan Morris Jones, gynt o Dal-y-bont, i Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Treorci ym 1928. Ni fu teilyngdod y flwyddyn honno ac mae'r gadair, ar hyn o bryd, yn San Ffagan.

Ymfudodd nifer o drigolion Tal-y-bont i Awstralia yn ystod cyfnod Lewis Thomas a bu yntau yn garedig wrthynt gan roddi gwaith a thai iddynt. Blackstone yw enw'r pentref bychan wrth droed y bryn a gwelir yno strydoedd megis Lewis Street, Anne Street, Mary Street a Jones Street lle roedd y glowyr yn byw. Daeth rhai o'r ymfudwyr hwythau i amlygrwydd yn y gymdeithas gyda chefnogaeth Lewis Thomas.

Ymwelodd Lewis Thomas a'i deulu â Thal-y-bont yn nechrau'r ganrif ac, wrth gwrs, cafodd groeso mawr. Cyn ymadael rhoddodd sofran i bob pentrefwr dros 70 a cheiniog i bob plentyn. Ar y ffordd yn ôl galwodd y teulu mewn nifer o wledydd a phrynu trysorau i'r plasdy yn baentiadau,

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In 1859 Lewis Thomas, who was brought up in poverty in a small cottage behind Bethel Chapel, emigrated to Australia. He worked in the Ceulan Factory until he left for Australia after marrying Anne Morris the sister of the owner, Richard Morris. After arriving in Melbourne, he worked his way under difficult circumstances to the state of Queensland, and there he sank coal pits and called them Aberdare and Ebbw Vale. Like some of the Welsh coal barons, he became a millionaire but nineteen years passed before he managed to persuade his wife Anne to join him in Australia. They had one daughter, Mary.

He used some of his wealth to build a mansion on top of a hill near the town of Ipswich and called it Brynhyfryd.

He took great interest in the community and served as the Member of Parliament for Queensland. He also established a successful Eisteddfod in Queensland. He donated money and land in order to found an united church at Blackstone; the focus of Welsh life. Rhys Jones, one of the ministers of this church, retired to Taliesin where he built himself a wooden bungalow and called it Brynhyfryd! The Welsh people in the area presented a chair, carved by a craftsman, Evan Morris Jones, formerly of Tal-y-bont to the National Eisteddfod at Treorchy in 1928. No poem was worthy of the chair that year and it is now at St. Fagan's.

Several Tal-y-bont people emigrated to Australia during Lewis Thomas' time and he kindly provided them with jobs and houses. The name of the little village at the foot of the hill is Blackstone and it has street names such as Lewis Street, Anne Street, Mary Street and Jones Street where the miners lived. A few of the immigrants became prominent figures themselves in the community, supported by Lewis Thomas.

Lewis Thomas and his family visited Tal-y-bont at the beginning of the century and of course he was given a huge welcome. Before departing he gave every villager who was over 70 a sovereign and every child a penny. On the return journey the family visited several countries and bought treasures for the mansion in the form of paintings,

dodrefn, addurniadau ac ati. Prynwyd telyn i'r ferch, Mary, a bu'n diddannu yr ymwelwyr pwysig fyddai'n dod i Brynhyfryd. Yn 1909 buddsoddodd Lewis Thomas £1000 i gynnal ysgoloriaeth i unrhyw fachgen o Dal-y-bont a fyddai'n dilyn cwrs yn y Brifysgol yn Aberystwyth. Bu'r ysgoloriaeth mewn bod hyd 1966 pryd y trosglwyddwyd yr arian i ymddiriedolaeth arall. Manteisiodd nifer dda o fechgyn Tal-y-bont ar yr ysgoloriaeth.

Diwedd trist sydd i'r stori. Bu Lewis Thomas farw cyn ei wraig. Bu i'r ferch Mary Cribb farw ar enedigaeth ei phumed plentyn a bu ei mam, Anne Thomas, yn tra arglwyddiaethu ar y mab yng nghyfraith a'r teulu hyd ei marwolaeth hi yn 93 oed gan adael plasdy yn llawn trysorau a dodrefn o'r radd flaenaf. Wedi ei dyddiau hi dihybyddwyd y cyfoeth yn fuan a gwerthwyd y gwaith glo. Canlyniad hynny oedd i'r perchnogion newydd anwybyddu trefn a chynllun Lewis Thomas a dilyn gwythien oedd yn mynd o dan y plasdy gan achosi i'r syfaeni suddo. Gwerthwyd popeth a bu raid chwalu'r tŷ oherwydd ei gyflwr peryglus. Fe'i chwalwyd megis i'r pedwar gwynt. Y mae drws gwydr o'r plasdy a'r geiriau Brynhyfryd arno yn gweithredu fel drws i'r capel Cymraeg yn Blackstone.

Oherwydd yr argraff wnaeth Lewis Thomas ar y gymdeithas yn ne Queensland mae'r hanes wedi ei gofnodi yn bur fanwl gan awduron lleol. Penawd un erthygl oedd, 'Founded on coal and destroyed by coal'. Ie, mewn un cenhedlaeth.

furniture, decorations etc. A harp was bought for Mary, the daughter, and she entertained important visitors who came to Brynhyfryd. In 1909 Lewis Morris invested a sum of £1000 in order to provide a scholarship for any boy from Tal-y-bont who followed a course at Aberystwyth University. The scholarship continued until 1966 when the money was transferred to another trust. Several Tal-y-bont boys took advantage of this scholarship.

The story has a sad ending. Lewis Thomas predeceased his wife. The daughter, Mary Cribb, died giving birth to her fifth child and her mother Anne Thomas dominated her son-in-law and family until she died at the age of 93, leaving a mansion full of treasures and furniture which were of the very best quality.

After her death the wealth quickly disappeared and the coal pits were sold. As a result the new owners discarded Lewis Morris' plans and methods and followed a vein which went under the mansion, causing the foundations to sink. Everything was sold and the house had to be demolished due to its dangerous state. There was nothing left. A glass door from the mansion with the words Brynhyfryd on it is now to be seen as a door to the Welsh chapel in Blackstone.

Because of the impression Lewis Thomas made upon the community of south Queensland, his story has been chronicled in detail by local authors. The heading of one article was, 'Founded on coal and destroyed by coal'. True, and within one generation.



Valma Jones

Valma Jones

*Llun:
Lewis Thomas a'i wyres, Valma*

*Photograph:
Lewis Thomas and his grand-daughter, Valma.*