

'Caethwasiaeth o'r Llaw i'r Genau' ym Mryniau Maesyfed

by Derek Turner

Pan bregethodd George Fox ar gomin ym Maesyfed, Comin Pen-y-bont yn ôl pob tebyg, ym 1657, roedd newydd ddod o Frycheiniog lle gafodd las groeso. Deuai ddwywaith eto i bregethu ym Maesyfed ym 1663 a 1667, a'i ysbrydoliaeth yntau barodd yn uniongyrchol i David Powell, o Landegla, ym 1673, roi llain fach o dir i fod yn fynwent i'r Crynwyr, ac i'r tir yma ymhen yr hir a'r hwyr fynd dan yr enw'r Pales.

Gan fod y Crynwyr yn gwrthod talu degwm i'r Eglwys Wladol, chaen nhw ddim claddu eu meirwon ym mynwentydd y plwy.

Ychwanegwyd y Tŷ Cwrdd yn y Pales ym 1717.

Agorodd ysgol yn y Pales ym 1867 a William Knowles yn Brifathro arni.

Roedd William yn ddisgyblwr llym a ffynnodd yr ysgol dan ei warchodaeth. Roedd ei ddisgyblion, meddai: "mor ddrygonus ag y bo modd".

Pan ymddiswyddodd William ym 1874, efallai oherwydd y Ddeddf Addysg newydd, roedd hi'n fain ar yr ysgol nes i Grynwr Efengylaidd ar ymweliad o America, Yardley Warner, gael ei ddarbwylllo i ddod yn Brifathro'r Pales ym 1876. Ni allasai Yardley yn ei fyw fod yn fwy gwahanol i William Knowles.

Er mai'n gyfreithiwr yr hyfforddodd, roedd ganddo gefndir o fri ym maes addysgu a rhyddfrenio caethweision yn Tennessee. Wedi pechu yn erbyn llawer o Grynwyr, daethai i Brydain i godi arian i brynu tir i'r caethweision rhydd. Mae'r ffaith iddo aros yn y Pales am bum mlynedd yn ddrych o'r tlodi gafodd ym Maesyfed.

Meddai:

"Along came little Welsh feet with much clatter and I find myself saying 'no rest till 4 o'clock!'

They are elastic and buoyant beyond all children I ever had to do with; and my resources are taxed to keep them supplied with work;

that is the only way to keep order and to manage without "the cane" – to which they have been used, but I will never use, nor can use."

Yn addysgwr, roedd Yardley ymhell o flaen ei oes. Defnyddiai'r dirwedd o gwmpas y Pales yn sail ei ddysgu a chael hwyl arni'n galluogi myfyrwyr a chanddyn nhw addysg sylfaenol ac at hynny cyflawni mynediad i Rydychen a Chaergrawnt.

Gyda'i wraig Anne, Nyrs o Loegr, byddai'n gweini ar anghenion y tlodion bob dydd, ac roedd yn gwaredu at amgylchiadau byw a dibyniaeth ar y ddiod cynifer o'r bobl oedd yn gwneud eu gorau i grafu bywoliaeth o'r llaw i'r genau. Mae'r ffaith iddo aros am bum mlynedd yn y Pales yn tystio i'r ffaith ei fod yn cael y bobl ym Maesyfed yn ddim gwell eu byd na'r caethweision yn America yr ymroes i'w helpu am gyfran fawr o'i oes.

Fodd bynnag, y feirniadaeth ddaeth i'w ran oherwydd ei ddulliau dysgu a barodd iddo ymddiswyddo ac aeth yntau, Anne a'u teulu ifanc yn eu holau i America.

Subsistence Slavery in the Radnorshire Hills

by Derek Turner

When George Fox preached on a common in Radnorshire, most probably Penybont Common, in 1657, he had just come from Brecknockshire where he was not well received. He would come twice more to preach in Radnorshire in 1663 and 1667, and it was his inspiration that led directly to David Powell, from Llandegley, in 1673, giving a small piece of land to act as a graveyard for Quakers, and for this land to become known as the Pales. As the Quakers refused to pay tithes to the Established Church, they were not permitted to bury their dead in Parish graveyards. The Meeting House at the Pales was added in 1717.

A school opened at the Pales in 1867 with William Knowles as Headmaster. William was a strict disciplinarian and the school thrived under his tutelage. He described his pupils as being: "as wicked as could be".

When William resigned in 1874, possibly because of the new Education Act, the school was in difficulty until a visiting American Evangelical Quaker, Yardley Warner, was persuaded to become Headmaster of the Pales in 1876. Yardley could not have been more different to William Knowles. Though he had trained as a lawyer, he had a renowned background in the education and emancipation of slaves in Tennessee. Offending many Quakers, he had come to Britain to raise funds to buy land for the freed-slaves. The fact that he stayed 5 years at the Pales reflects on the poverty he found in Radnorshire. He commented:

"Along came little Welsh feet with much clatter and I find myself saying 'no rest till 4 o'clock!' They are elastic and buoyant beyond all children I ever had to do with; and my resources are taxed to keep them supplied with work; that is the only way to keep order and to manage without "the cane" – to which they have been used, but I will never use, nor can use."

As an educator Yardley was way ahead of his time. He used the landscape around the Pales as the basis of his teaching and had success in enabling students with basic education and also in achieving Oxbridge entrance.

With his wife Anne, an English Nurse, he ministered to the poor on a daily basis, and he was shocked by the living conditions and the dependence on alcohol of so many of the people who were trying to eke out a subsistence living. The fact that he stayed five years at the Pales is testament to the fact that he found the people in Radnorshire no better off than the slaves in America who he had dedicated so much of his life to helping.

It was however the criticism he received over his teaching techniques that saw him resign and he, Anne and young family returned to America.