

An Angry Mob Attacks Missionaries near Llangeler, Carmarthenshire

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Sunday, the first of October 1854, missionaries David Jeremy and his companion Daniel Thomas – both members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (‘Mormons’) walked to

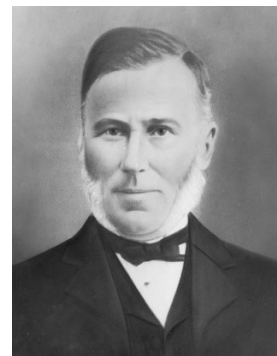


preach near Saron Independent Chapel in Llangeler Parish. It was good weather, and the missionaries complied with a previous invitation to preach by conducting an outdoor meeting. The preaching was interrupted however when people began leaving their own meeting in Saron Independent Welsh Chapel. Hearing the missionaries, some of the new listeners began to call out at them and then began to throw stones and clods of dirt.

The attacks were mostly directed at Daniel Thomas. While the members of the locally organized Chapel may have held various non-conformist beliefs, Daniel may have challenged some sensitive Protestant doctrines that came from his upbringing with his family in a similar Independent Chapel at Pencader, or they knew him as he was born in Llanfihangel-ar-Arth only six miles away. The crowd were angry. They were led by John Davies, a farmer who also ran a small tavern at Groesfford crossroads just south of Saron. Davies shouted his boasts of cruelty louder than the missionaries could speak. The stones came harder, hitting Daniel so that blood began to flow down his face.

David Jeremy recalled hearing the words, “Away with them!” as he tried to reason with the mob. With Daniel’s injury, they turned to walk away expecting that the crowd would not follow. But the stones and yelling continued with them down the road to the south. Picking up the pace, David estimated that there were thirty to forty people coming after them, still throwing enough stones to hit their marks that the Elders began to stumble.

After running for some time “like foxes before the hounds,” David realized that the crowd were still calling Daniel’s name. Believing that Daniel was the main target, David stopped and turned to reason again with the crowd, which allowed enough time for Daniel to escape into the brambles and bogs along the streams flowing north to the Teifi. Several of the mob broke off to follow him. Daniel was able to lose them and made it home to have his wounds attended.



Daniel Thomas in later years

The remainder of the mob then turned its fury on David Jeremy. Someone hit his head with a large rock causing a wound to the skull about two inches long. Falling to the ground, David felt the mobbers kick and beat him as someone called out, “Now you’ve finally killed him, his skull is broken!” Just then, a man who went by the name “Dafydd,” probably a local and respected farmer who lived to the south of Groesfford named David Evans, stood against the mob to protest. He shouted, “You’ll not kill him before killing me! Leave him alone!” Dafydd drove off the crowd and helped David Jeremy stumble to Treolmawr¹, the house of Mr. H. Howells, probably Howell Howells of the local gentry. Mr. Howells cared for David and bound his wounds. David rested there that night. The next day, Mr. Howells lent him one of his own horses, and David was able to make his way home to Brechfa.



Two weeks after the attack, David went to his brother, Thomas Jeremy, who was in Carmarthen. Thomas Jeremy had been working on settling some family business since returning from Utah on a mission to Wales. He visited with a lawyer friend, Mr Thomas Parry, who advised that some legal action could be taken against those in the mob, and recommended that further consultations could be had with Mr. Hugh Williams, an attorney in Ferryside with experience in such matters. Thomas Jeremy also consulted with a medical doctor, Howell Evans of Carmarthen, who examined David Jeremy and confirmed that “the wounds were dangerous.”

After further consultation with Mr. Williams and an exchange of letters between the two attorneys, Mr Parry drafted letters to the known members of the mob demanding monetary satisfaction for injuries to the missionaries.

On the appointed day, men came to the office of Mr. Parry. Thomas Thomas, a carpenter, paid a pound which included damages and attorney expenses. John Davies, tavern keeper, appeared and said he would go to jail before he paid anything. While the men were there, Mr Parry received a letter from John Lloyd Davies of Blaendyffryn, Cardiganshire with no payment, rather dreadful words accusing the missionaries and their co-religionists of being “vagabonds” and worse (being a vagabond was an offence carrying a jail sentence at the time). This was likely the same John Lloyd Davies who successfully stood for Parliament the next year. It appears that the missionaries took no further legal action.

¹ The name of the house is also spelled “Triolmawr,” “Tryolmawr,” “Tryalmawr,” and “Trualmawr” in different records, but is currently spelled “Triolmawr.” The house is just under four miles to the southeast from Saron Chapel which indicates that the chase may have gone some distance.

In 1855, Both Daniel Thomas and David Jeremy emigrated from Britain to the United States. They traveled by pioneer wagon to Utah. Daniel raised a large family. He died in 1890 and is buried in Ogden, Utah. While married, David had no children. He suffered from epileptic fits for the rest of his life, believed to be caused by the injury to his skull on the run from Saron Chapel. On 3 April 1885, he died of such a fit in Salt Lake City.

Sources:

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