

Evan Morgan: A statement of faith on his gravestone

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February 2022

Among the many headstones in the parish churchyard of St Teilo's, Brechfa (Carmarthenshire) is a medium-sized upright stone with pointed top, and a dove of peace carved above the inscription. Generally an unremarkable headstone, it is nevertheless one on which a statement of faith has been made.

The headstone is for local stone mason Evan Morgan, who died in 1899, and his wife Anne who died before him in 1886. The mark of his faith is that on the inscription for Ann, Evan stated that she was the wife of *Henuriad* [Elder] Evan Morgan.

(Photograph: Jill Morgan, 2016)



As the photograph shows the gravestone is in good condition, although an amount of lichen makes reading a little difficult. The inscription reads:

ER COF AM
ANNE
GWRAIG HENURIAD EVAN MORGAN
NANTHIR GER BRECHFA
BU FARW CHWEF 22 1886
YN 84 OED
HEFYD AM YR UCHOD EVAN MORGAN
BU FARW RHAG 19 1899 YN 92 M OED

In memory of
Anne
Wife of Elder Evan Morgan
Nanthir near Brechfa

Died Feb 22 1886
84 years old
Also the above Evan Morgan
Died Dec 19 1899 at 92 years old



This photograph taken in the 1980s gives a clearer picture of the inscription. (Photograph: Ron Dennis, used with permission)

Evan and Anne Morgan were baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ('Mormons' or *Latter Day Saints*) on 8 October 1848 at Brechfa. Their children Sally (b. 1832), Lucrecia (b. 1834), John (b. 1839), and Anne (b. 1843) were also subsequently baptized. The term *Henuriad* /Elder denotes that Evan was one of the local lay priesthood by which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is governed. For a small farming community Brechfa was a place where a surprisingly large number converted to Mormonism in the late 1840s. Local converts Thomas Jeremy and his brother, David, preached extensively in the area and baptized several dozen converts.

Early census records, when the family were listed as living at Llawr Barth, Llanfihangelrhosycorn, just a few miles north of Brechfa, show that most of the children were born in Llanfihangelrhosycorn, where Evan and Anne were also married. Evan was born in Gloucester of Welsh parents, and the 1891 census shows that he spoke both English and Welsh (essential to his business in a Carmarthenshire village). Anne was from Llanwenog, Cardiganshire. By 1871 they had moved to Nanthir, a house which no longer stands but which was on the road out of Brechfa to Llanllwni to the north, just beyond Marlais Mill.



Evan and Anne Morgan gravestone showing location in relation to the church (Photograph: Jill Morgan, 2016)

John Thomas (1837-1914) who joined the LDS Church in Llanelli (Carmarthenshire) in the 1850s and then emigrated to Utah, returned to Wales as a missionary from 1886 to 1888. In his journal, which is very detailed, he makes several mentions of visiting the 'saints' (i.e. members of the LDS church) in Brechfa, including Evan Morgan, who was for many years president of the local branch. He also refers to sleeping at *Nanthir* where the Morgan family lived.

An entry from John Thomas' journal in June 1887 reads:

Jun 12th got up about Seven it was very foggie. and we thought it would turn Out Stormy. but if Ever I prayed to got any blessing it was for a fine day, has [as] we had a long journey to go to preach about Nine Miles. about Nine O Clock it did Clear off and we had a Splendid day we Started and got Bro Evan Morgan to go with us. although he is in his Eightieth year he walked about 13 Miles. we held a Meeting at "Tynon Garredig" Near "Llan y bythar" we had about 200 or More very fine people to listen to us. they Sang for us Bro Morgan Prayed and Elder D.F.Thomas Spoke first and I followed then Brother John Evans "Pen y Wern" Spoke very good, the first time for me to See this Old Brother. it was a time of Rejoicing. as we Came home we called at a Farm house Named "Pant yr Rhyg" and was very Kindly asked in to get Something to Eat, and they Brought us Bread & Chees and plenty of Milk. and I will Say I did Enjoy it. Came home it was half past Nine. did Sleep at Pant y fer Near Brechfa did walk 18.Miles.

Then in the same year entries for July/ August read:

July 30. ...So I went to Bro Evan Morgans and got Share of his bed. We had a good long Chat with the Old Jent did wright an Answer to Bro Elias Davies Letter &

gave him all the News I Could Slept at Evan Morgans "Nant Hir" Nr Breachfa walked 6 Miles

Jul 31st got up after a pretty good Rest and got a basin of Sop for breakfast The Old Jent is alone So I took what I thought I Could Eat I went Over to Visit Daniel Davies & got a Cup of Tea their [there] & aple pie first this Season Met Bro D.F. Thomas. and went to Meeting at Evan Morgans we were Seven persons presant Brother D F Thomas & My Self did adminster the Sacrament D.F Spoke to the Saints. and I followed after wich Bro Morgans Spoke. Then we Closed & got a little Dinner. It had began to Rain & we thought we would again fail to go to Our Out door Meeting it was to be in a Farm House. Named "Hendref Fadog" at Siman [Simon] Thomass he had put up a Stand for us to preach if it was fine we would have had a large Congregation I had to Pitch the Singing and we done Well Elder Morgans was the first Speker then Elder D.F.Thomas Spoke for Half an hour & I followed him & we had a very good time went back & I Slept with Bro Morgans Nant Hir. Near Breachfa. walked 8 Miles.

Aug 1st got up at Seven and got Sop again for breakfast. did get a good Many welsh tracts with him. They are Most of them Orsen Pratts works a very Nice lot. They Ought to have been given to the People So that they Could do Some good I wished Bro Morgans good bye and Started for Pant y fer.

The *Cambrian* newspaper for 16 February 1849 reported on a group of 'Mormon' converts from the Brechfa area emigrating to the American West:

'Amongst the group were many substantial farmers from the neighbourhoods of Brechfa and Llanybydder, Carmarthenshire; and although they were well to do, they disposed of their possessions to get to California, their New Jerusalem as they deemed it, where their fanaticism teaches them to believe that they will escape from the general destruction and conflagration that is shortly to envelop this earth.'

Evan and Ann Morgan of course remained in Brechfa for the rest of their lives, but they may have had family who emigrated as members of the LDS church.

This is one of few known gravestones in Wales where the deceased declares his membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by stating his priesthood office. It is a monument to constancy and the lasting faith of a couple who remained in Wales when many were emigrating, and also remained active and faithful members of the LDS church into their advanced years.



St Teilo's, Brechfa, Carmarthenshire. *Photograph: Jill Morgan, 2016*

Note: The missionary journal of John Thomas is available in its entirety at: <http://www.welshsaints.byu.edu> in his personal record under the *Immigrants* tab.