

John Price: Persistence in the face of persecution

Gary Williams



John Price (1820-1883)

John Price's conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints occurred as a young man while he was conspiring with his friend to throw stones at the 'Mormon' missionaries who were baptizing in a local Monmouthshire river. But, as he saw what was happening, he could not do it and his heart forever changed. Later, as a missionary for the LDS church in Pembrokeshire, he was himself the target of thrown stones. In Little Newcastle in particular, people threw stones, and even discharged firearms in his direction. The Latter Day Saint missionaries had to hold all their church meetings in the late evening, when most people were asleep.

One such meeting held in Little Newcastle, October 1847, ended when an outsider tossed a rotting horse leg down the chimney, filling the house with smoke, dust and soot. A comical account was afterwards published in the *Pembrokeshire Herald*, with blame laid on 'local urchins.' Perhaps more likely is that this incident was an example of *Ceffyl Pren* - ritual humiliation for neighbours who get out of line.

What's surprising is not that the Latter Day Saint missionaries suffered a little persecution in Little Newcastle. The amazing thing is that John Price and his companions kept coming back! And, because they came back to Little Newcastle in the Spring of 1848, John Price, John Davies and John Evans taught a 15 year-old David John who believed their message.¹ John Price never mentioned the boy David John in his journal, and David's parents forbade him from attending the church, even after they discovered he was baptized.

In 1849, John Price seemed to have given up on Little Newcastle, writing: "*after trying to save them till I was wearied I left them to their fate and went in search of a people who would hear and obey the Gospel.*" He gives the impression that his work in Little Newcastle had been a failure. But, the message that John Price and his companions taught David John led to significant future spiritual experiences for the young man, who would go on to serve a mission himself for the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter Day Saints, and eventually find a new home across the ocean. Thousands of David's descendants are still in the LDS church and many of his descendants from every generation have returned to the UK and Little Newcastle as missionaries or visitors. In large part, this is because of persistence in the face of adversity by John Price and his companions.

John Price later settled in Malad, Idaho and David John in Provo, Utah, and there is no evidence that they ever met again after they emigrated.

ⁱ David John kept an extensive journal which can be found online at: <http://www.welshsaints.byu.edu/>