

MARI JONES (DECEMBER 16 1784 - DECEMBER 29, 1864)

In 1800 a young protestant woman named Mari Jacob Jones, who was only 16 years old at the time, walked bare foot from her home in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to Bala – a journey of over 50 miles there and back – in order to buy a copy of the Bible in Welsh. She had saved for over six years to have enough money to buy a copy, but there was nowhere nearer to home where she could purchase a Bible than Bala. She began her journey one morning in 1800, but by the time she reached the town, there were no Welsh Bibles left anywhere.

Thomas Charles a well respected local man, who organised circulating reading schools in the region (including the school at which Mari herself had learned to read), took pity on Mari and gave her his own precious copy of the Bible. This act inspired the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Mari later married a weaver of Bryn-Crug by the name of Thomas Lewis. She died in 1864 and was buried at the graveyard of Bryn-crug Calvinistic Methodist Chapel. Her own bible is now kept at the British and Foreign Bible Society's archives in Cambridge University Library. It is one of only ten thousand copies of the 1799 edition of the Welsh Bible that were printed at Oxford on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

On the last page of the Apocrypha, Mari Jones wrote in English: Mary Jones was born 16th of December 1784. I Bought this in the 16th year of my age. I am Daughter of Jacob Jones and Mary Jones His wife. the Lord may give me grace. Amen. Mary Jones His [is] The True Onour [owner] of this Bible. Bought In the Year 1800 Aged 16.

Another of the copies she purchased in Bala is now in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; see www.llgc.org.uk for further details.

A walking route stretches between Mari's home in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to the Bala. See The Bible Society in Wales for details:
<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/what-we-do/our-work/mary-jones/>