

Photo: Llanfihangel y Pennant Church Credit: castlewales.com

Mary Jones

HER LIFE

Mary Jones was born in 1784 and lived at Llanfihangel y Pennant, near Abergynolwyn. She was from a poor family and lived with her parents, Jacob and Mary, who were both weavers.

They lived in a small cottage called Ty'n Ddol which was built from local stone and positioned next to a stream that provided all the water the family needed. The remains of the cottage can still be seen today and a monument to remember Mary Jones was erected within its remaining walls in 1907.

She was baptised at the nearby Llanfihangel y Pennant church which was the same church where her parents had married on 25 May, 1783.

Mary's father sadly died in 1789 when Mary was only four years old. This meant that she had to help her mother from a young age with chores around the house. At only eight years old she became very interested in the Bible and wanted to hear more of

the stories within it. As Welsh Bibles at that time were rare and very expensive, it wasn't possible for Mary's mother to afford their own copy. A more affluent couple, Mr and Mrs Evans, who lived on a nearby farm two miles away from Mary's cottage, had a copy of a Welsh Bible and said she could visit any time to read it.

Mary's mother was very religious and both of them travelled two miles every Sunday to attend chapel at Cwrt. One of the visiting preachers was the Revd Thomas Charles, who was a prominent Christian leader in Wales at the time. Mary also attended one of the new schools that were introduced and organised by him. Literacy level at this time in Wales was low and Mary was fortunate to be able to attend school to learn how to read and write.

Mary always wanted her own copy of the Welsh Bible and was determined to be able to buy one. She had heard that the Reverend Thomas Charles was selling them in Bala.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible is the world's best-selling book.

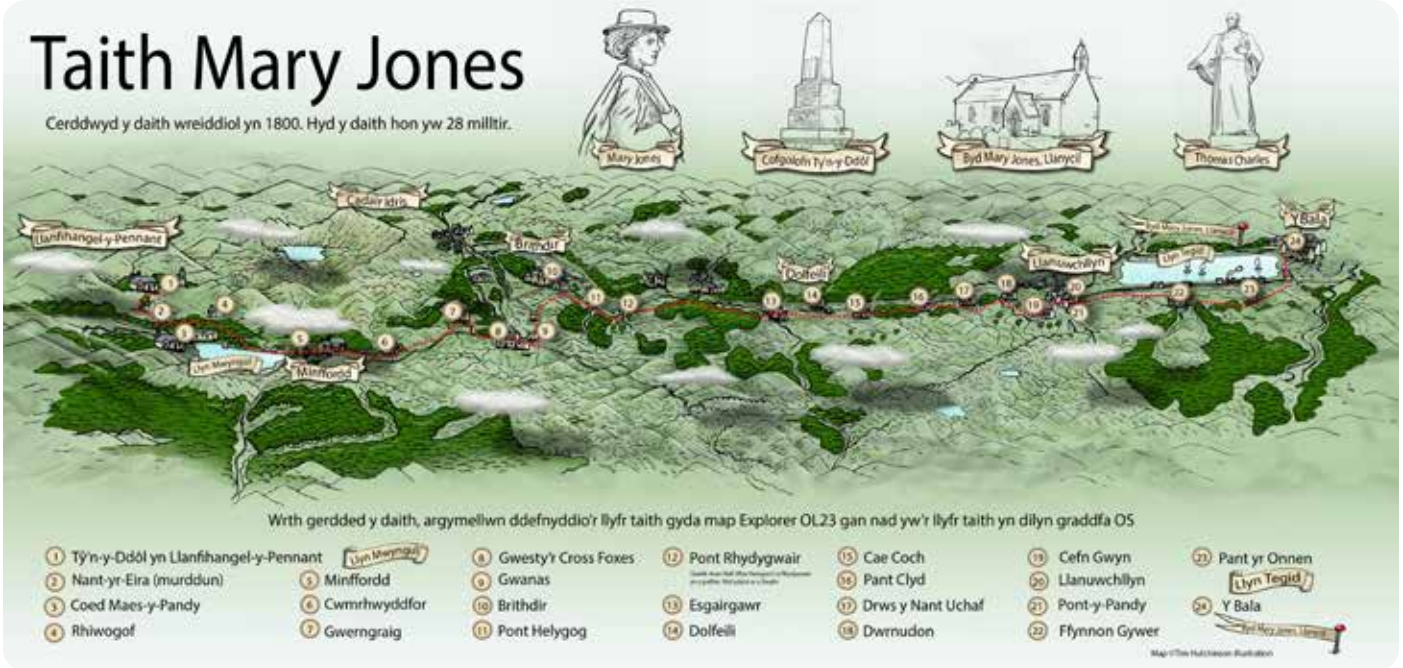


Artist illustration of Mary Jones Credit: ????

HER JOURNEY

Taith Mary Jones

Cerddwyd y daith wreiddiol yn 1800. Hyd y daith hon yw 28 milltir.

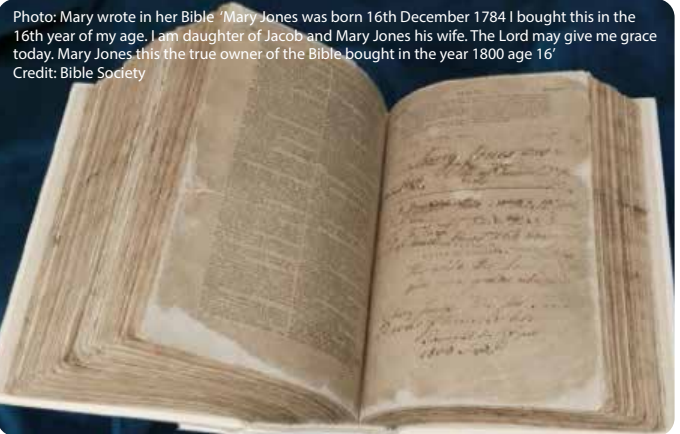


Mary worked hard for six years until she earned enough money by working in nearby farms such as the Evans', sewing and keeping bees in order to sell the honey to the local community. In 1800 she finally had enough money to be able to buy her own Welsh Bible – 3s 6d (three shillings and six pence in Mary's time).

The only way for her to get to Bala was by walking, a mammoth journey of 26 miles through the rural Welsh countryside. Determined to buy her Welsh Bible, Mary waved goodbye to her mother and set off on her journey with her hard-earned money and some bread and cheese. She was given a pair of shoes but afraid of ruining them, she carried them in her bag and walked for most of the time barefooted.

When she arrived at Revd Thomas Charles' house she was devastated to hear that all the Bibles had been sold and there were none left for her to buy. Thomas Charles could see how disappointed she was and told her that more would be arriving soon. He then offered her a place to stay until a new supply of Bibles arrived to save her from having to journey home empty-handed.

He was so touched by her determination that he let have her three for the price of one. Mary was so glad to have her own Welsh Bible and she set off on her long journey home with happiness in her heart.



DID YOU KNOW?

Two of the three Bibles she received can still be seen today. One is kept at the University Library, Cambridge and the other at Aberystwyth University Library. It's believed that Mary's son took the third Bible with him when he emigrated to the United States.



HER LEGACY

In her adult life Mary went on to marry Thomas Jones and gave birth to six children, but sadly five of them died due to disease that were common at that time, such as tuberculosis (TB). She lived until she was 80 years old and is buried in Bryncreg Chapel on the outskirts of Tywyn. By the end of her life she had lost her sight but could recite passage from the Bible from memory. The Bible and her faith remained very important to her throughout her whole life.

Mary's incredible story had a huge impact on Thomas Charles and he realised there were more people like Mary Jones who couldn't afford a Bible in their own language. With this in mind, he travelled to London to meet with some of his influential friends with the idea of establishing a group that would ensure everyone could afford a Bible of their own in their own language.

The initial aim was to address the need for reduced-price Bibles for Welsh speakers, but in the meeting the Revd Joseph Hughes

said; 'If for Wales, why not for the kingdom? And if for the kingdom, why not the world?' In 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was established, now known simply as Bible Society. Its mission was to make sure that everyone around the world was able to have a copy of the Bible in their own language.

More than 200 years later, Bible Society is now working in over 200 countries, translating, producing and distributing Bibles with a focus on China, Africa and the Middle East. It also works to advocate for the place of the Bible in today's society and help people relate and make sense of it in their everyday lives.

Bible Society runs many projects to encourage people to engage with the Bible, such as Open the Book, where groups of volunteers perform stories from the Bible in schools, and The Bible Course. It has also worked with a professional garden designer to develop a garden based on Psalm 23 which will be displayed at the 2021 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Bible Society also runs the Mary Jones World visitor centre in Bala, that retells the story of Mary Jones and Thomas Charles and the impact of the Bible on the world.

Mary is still an inspiration for people today and hundreds of people have completed her 26-mile walk, following in her footsteps and experiencing for themselves the journey that inspired the establishment of a world-wide organisation. The walk is detailed in the Mary Jones Walk guide which was written by one of Mary Jones World's beloved volunteers, Mary Thomas who is a passionate supporter of the story.

DID YOU KNOW?

There's a Mary Jones Club in India! Members study and promote the Bible as well as doing charity work in hospitals and jails.



Photo: Mary Jones monument - Credit: brifairtexpress.com



Photo: Mary Jones World - Credit: Bible Society



Photo: School children at Mary Jones World - Credit: Bible Society

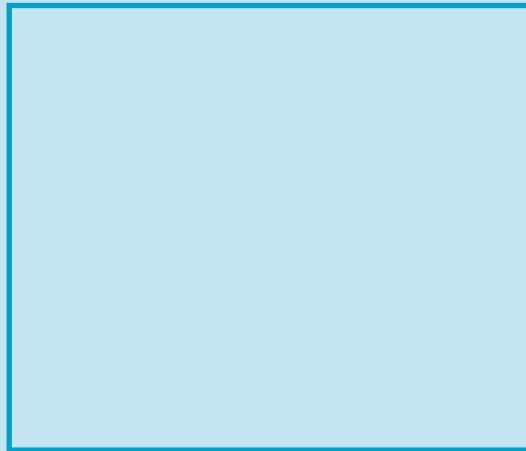
ACTIVITY PAGE

Can you find these five words in the word search?

Mary, Thomas, Bible, Bala, Walking

I	A	M	L	T	B	A	J	N	G
L	V	Z	B	G	Q	B	G	N	Z
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What would you be willing to walk 26 miles for? Draw a picture and explain why.



Questions:

1. What was the name of the village where Mary Jones lived as a young girl?

2. Which book did Mary want to buy?

3. How old was Mary when she walked to Bala?

4. Why was Mary disappointed when she arrived at Thomas Charles' house?

5. What was established in 1804?

6. Name three Bible Society projects
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
7. In which country is there a Mary Jones Club?

Colour in this picture of Mary Jones:



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