

Elder Franklin D. Richards' Diary



President Kent Richards, a member of the area presidency, recently visited Wales and talked to us of his great, great grandfather's missionary service in this country. Here are some extracts from Elder Franklin D. Richards' diary in December 1866, just after Elder Abel Evans who was serving a mission in South Wales died of consumption and was buried at the Cefn Coed cemetery in Merthyr Tydfil. It gives an insight into the commitment of these men to the Lord's service.

December 1866

Saturday December 1 - A telegram informs us that Bro. Evans died last evening at 7 o'clock. Bro. Pratt returned and requested me to write to Bro. John Parry about funeral and several other items which I did. ...

Sunday December 2

Received an invitation from Bro. John Parry to attend the funeral of Bro. Abel Evans on Tuesday at 3 p.m. in Merthyr at Bros Thomas R. James, 2 Brecon Rd., which I accepted and arranged for ...

Monday December 3 With John Young I booked at Lime Street Station, 2d class for Merthyr via Crewe, Shrewsbury, Hereford for 22/8 at 10:30 and arrived at M... about 6:30 p.m., where, although very stormy we found Br. J. Parry, J. Rees, Elias Morris, R.J. Davies and Joseph Lawson. J.W.Y and I slept at 2 Brecon Rd. Wet day and night.

Tuesday December 4 - Being a very wet and wintry day but few could attend the funeral though many stood out in the rain. I assisted the Brethren and put on all the appropriate clothing on to the corpse as it should be and at 3 p.m., a prayer was offered and we went to the chapel at the graveyard, two miles, and there had service and burial in a very severe rainstorm. I spoke to those present so long as allowed by the authorities, who, in the chapel allow half a crown for the minister officiating—the first ever I heard of Government allowing me Money for my ministry. 2/6 funeral expenses—or what it costs to die and be buried civilly in Wales—

Undertakers on door visit before death - ten shillings and six pence

Respectable oak coffin with plate and handles and lined with flannel - thirty-five shillings

To Sexton for digging and filling grave - ten shillings

Door's certificate for burial - two shillings and six pence

Hearse - fifteen shillings and six pence

Carriage - five shillings

Total: £3-18-6

Wednesday December 5 - ... Spent today in getting items and making biographical sketch of Abel Evans life & sent it to LPool for the Star.

Thursday December 6 - ... Spent till past midnight conversing with J. Parry about our Great Latter-day Work. The Spirit rested down and refreshed our whole natures. ...

[Portions of the report of Abel's death, which was sent to Orson Pratt by F. D. Richards, is as follows:

Dear Orson Pratt:

Dear Brother:

It becomes our painful duty to record the departure of another faithful minister of the Gospel, Elder Abel Evans, late President of the Welsh District; who departed this life on Friday, Nov. 30th, at about ten minutes past 7 p.m. of consumption. His first illness was contracted by standing guard overnight while the saints were embarked on board the ship, John Bright, at Liverpool, on or about the 1st of May last. He struggled against this cough and cold with apparent success until sometime in September last while attending conference in Birmingham, he got wet, which renewed the cold and coughing upon him.

Just after getting wet at Birmingham during the second week of October, while travelling in the Carmarthen Conference, he slept in a damp place which fastened the cold and confirmed his cough upon him, from

which time he rapidly grew worse until his death. This was the immediate cause of his death, added to former exposures.

His indomitable energy and courage would not allow him to yield before the influence of the destroyer; and he continued to travel and preach out of doors and in until he became too weak to stand, still unwilling that his afflictions should be even referred to his friends, which was the reason we had not correct information of his real condition until our letter of particular inquiry which reached us only within a week of his decease. At this time, he was only able to be dressed daily, but not sit up even for this. It is deeply to be regretted that means or changes in circumstances might have been employed to mitigate the severity of his complaint at least, if not permitted to prevail for his recovery. From the time of his confinement to the house, all that the country could afford or that could be derived from the faithful attention and administration of faithful saints was bestowed....

Elders John Parry and John E. Rees were his faithful attendants at the residence of Brother Thomas James.

The deep and abiding affection which he had won in the hearts of all the Saints around, secured for him more of kindly consideration and tender manifestation than he could accept. He was strong and unshaken to the hour of his death that he should recover, and rebuked those who manifested any doubt. So great was his confidence of recovery, it was not until the day of his decease, that he consented for Brother Parry to write to his family in Utah to inform them that he was sick of a cold, but that he expected to be well in a few days and would write them himself. He did not seem to realize that he was very ill, and had no idea he was dangerous; nor did he complain of any disease or pain, except the inconvenience and weariness of the cough. He died with the utmost quieted, as a person falling asleep.

I assisted Elders J. W. Young, Parry, Morris, Rees, and Davies to lay his body out. Just as his family would wish to have it done if they could have been present to direct, and by request, I spoke to those at the funeral, according to the measure of the Spirit given to me. All was conducted with respect throughout, and only for the very stormy weather, a very numerous company would have been present. The funeral was on Tuesday the 4th instant at 3 o'clock p.m. Several of the American Elders were present – John W. Young, John Parry, Elias Morris, John Rees, Richard J. Davies, Joseph Lawson and myself.
F. D. Richards]

If you have contributions you would like to make to historic articles, please contact John Mahoney on ejmahoney1938@yahoo.co.uk

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[The above was taken from the June 2013 “Living History” Newsletter published by the Wales Church History Network.]