

## **John Penry: The Martyred Prophet**

On the back road from Llangammarch Wells to Tirabad, about two miles south of the former an ancient white longhouse can be found. It's hidden off the road up a farm track, and tucked in below the steep northern scarp slope of Mynydd Epynt. From the track which leads up to it are broad views over the Dulais valley and across the small village of Cefn-gorwydd towards Llanwrtyd Wells and the Cambrian Mountains. It is a very quiet spot where literally all that can be heard is birdsong and the baaa-ing of sheep. This is celebrated Cefn-brith, the old farmhouse reputed to be the birthplace of one of Wales's greatest sons, John Penry.



The first time I visited the farmhouse, it was during a wet spring a few years ago, and the farmyard was awash with mud and manure. It was difficult in town shoes to pick a way across the slurry to take some pictures, at the invitation of the old farmer who lived there. More recently I revisited the place and the yard was bone meal dry. It was strangely deserted, and seemingly empty, even timeless. I felt I had suddenly stepped back several hundred years, and was seeing the place as it would have been in the time it was occupied by the Penry family, although then the long, low farmhouse would have been thatched, rather than roofed with slate from North Wales. Only the old letter box on the gatepost, fashioned out of a Second World War ammunition box, suggested anything remotely like modernity - that and the bronze plaque on the porch which indicated it was a special birthplace.

Penry is a relatively unusual surname, derived from the Welsh 'ap Henry'. This Penry family are supposed to have been descended from Elystan Glodrydd (Elystan

the Renowned), about whom little is known, in spite of his name. He was born in about 980 and died 30 years later at a time when the life-span of warring kings tended to be brutally short, and the outlines of their kingdoms somewhat fluid. Elystan was the founder of the fifth royal dynasty in Wales, and ruler 'Rhwng Gwy a Hafren' (between Wye and Severn), approximately the area covered by the old counties of Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire. So there was royal Welsh blood in Penry's veins - ironic when you consider the battle he would have with English Queen Elizabeth - who had Welsh roots herself!



*The old green way down from Cefn Brith towards Cefn-gorwyd*

John Penry was born at Cefn-brith in 1563, the son of Meredith Penry, who was a relatively prosperous farmer, wealthy and influential enough to consider sending his son to be educated at Cambridge. We don't know the name of his mother. As a farmer's son, the young John would no doubt have been expected to work alongside his father and older brother Thomas on the farm. But he would undoubtedly also have been able to enjoy the stunning scenery that surrounded him, with the Epynt scarp towering up behind the farm, and the lovely Cwm yr Anell alongside the farm, a beautiful narrow valley cutting into the face of the Epynt. The Epynt scarp itself marked the beginning of a wild and open moorland which stretched for miles towards the south, from which there were open views right across the whole of mid-Wales. Maybe in part it was this landscape which gave the growing boy the great love for his country which would find expression in his campaigning on Wales's behalf.



*Epynt scarp near Llangammarch*

*View north from the top of the*

John Penry's parents were devout believers, and it would have been at the hearth at Cefn-brith that he would have received his initial spiritual instruction, quite probably from his mother. In all likelihood, he also received some education from the school held at the parish church in Llangammarch, before travelling to Brecon to receive further tuition at Christchurch School. From here he went on to study at Peterhouse in Cambridge in 1580 when he was seventeen, a journey of some two hundred mile from Cefn-brith, and a journey he would probably have made on foot once a year. Many Welshmen went to Oxford rather than Cambridge at that time - for one thing, it was a lot nearer. But it may well be a reflection of John Penry's parents own Puritan sympathies that led them to send their son further east to study, for Cambridge in 1580 was rather more open to the teaching of the Reformation than was Oxford. It was while he was here that John Penry came under deep personal spiritual conviction through listening to the preaching of Puritan theologians to whom he was introduced by John Udall, who has been described as "One of the most fluent and learned of Puritan controversialists", and who exhorted a great influence on the young Welshman. Penry was thoroughly converted, determining from that point to give his life to the pursuit of the kingdom of God, whatever the cost. Preaching the truth of the Gospel became his passion from that time.



*Peterhouse, Cambridge*

Penry graduated with a BA in 1584, and for a year returned to Wales, where in all probability he was engaged in preaching in a wide area around his home. Several churches trace their origins back to the preaching of John Penry, including the influential Congregational chapel at Troedrhiwdalar, just north of Llangammarch. One local history records:

*'During his visits to Breconshire he was publicly active in the dissemination of the Gospel, and in the northern part of the county, the Hundred of Builth, the oldest churches trace their origin to his personal efforts.'*

His preaching was both skilful and anointed, and had great impact, causing him to come to be known as 'Telyn Cymru' (the harp of Wales). It was his preaching as much as his later campaigning on behalf of the proclamation of the Gospel in Wales, that earned him the title 'the morning star of the Reformation in Wales'.

John Penry went back to Cambridge in October 1585, but in June the following year transferred to St Alban's College, Oxford to be examined for the degree of MA. In all likelihood, the move to Oxford was the result of a radical shift in his thinking developed in the years since his conversion. By the mid 1580's it was Oxford rather than Cambridge which was more radical in respect of Puritanism, and it may well be that he was persuaded that he would get a more sympathetic hearing of his views there than he would if he took his degree at Peterhouse. He graduated from Oxford in June 1586.





Merton, Oxford

One of the places which had come to be important for Penry during the Cambridge years was Northampton, which was something of a Puritan stronghold. Probably during vacation breaks, rather than make the long journey back home to Wales, John Penry visited new friends here. He became an establish member of a group of Dissenters in the town, and worshipped with them when he was there. It was at this time that John Penry also met and fell in love with Eleanor Godley, the daughter of Henry Godley, a local official, at whose house he lodged whenever he was in the Midlands town. They would be married at All Saints, Northampton on 5th September 1588, a church which was destroyed in a fire which ravaged most of the town in 1675.

After graduating and spending some time in Northampton, John Penry returned home to Cefn-brith to prepare for publication a polemical document on which he had already been working during his time in Cambridge. This was a work which went under the inordinately long title: '*A Treatise Containing The Aequity Of An Humble Supplication Which Is To Be Exhibited Unto Her Gracious Majesty And This High Court Of Parliament On The Behalf Of The Country Of Wales That Some Order May Be Taken For The Preaching Of The Gospel Among Those People*'. '*The Aequity*', as it is now referred to in short, was ultimately published at the start of 1587, the 500 copies printed in Oxford being brought hurriedly to London before the closing of the Parliamentary session. On 28th February an impassioned speech by the MP for Carmarthen presented the appeal to Parliament, where it also received the strong support of the MP for Warwickshire, Job Throckmorton, another friend of John Penry; but the response of Parliament as a whole was very cool. Archbishop Whitgift was absolutely horrified by what he saw as a direct attack on the governance of the Anglican Church, and ordered the book be seized and its author apprehended. John Penry was arrested, charged with treason and heresy, and imprisoned for a month. It was a strong warning to him to desist from any public criticism of the religious authorities in the land. In those days, criticism of the Church of England was interpreted as a direct attack on Queen Elizabeth herself as it's earthly head, as well as upon it's senior bishops whom she had appointed. However, on being asked by Whitgift to recant, John Penry's reply was: 'Never, God willing, as long as I live!' There was clearly trouble ahead.



Archbishop John Whitgift

Yet to us today, the appeal of 'The Aequity' seems perfectly reasonable. The Welsh historian R Tudur Jones suggests it is based on two primary assumptions:

*'One was his Calvinistic conviction that an individual's eternal fate depended on his or her response to the the Word of God. The other was his sense of the uniqueness of Wales.'*

John Penry pleaded *'that Wales should be freed from destroying ignorance by being given 'teaching ministers.'* Through conversion they would escape everlasting death and God's present anger. *One remedy alone there is, Pastors, true shepherds, to feed the people with the bread of life ; and 'bring us home,' he cries, 'to the only Lord of pastors.'* ... *'Teach us the laws of God, is the cry of the Welsh people ; deliver us from Satan! 'We are wearie of the heavie bondage of the one, and desire the easie yoke of the other.'*

He underscored the importance of the plea by pointing out: *'There are a score of parishes in which not one soul can be found having 'a saving knowledge.'* *Thousands have barely heard of Christ. If any 'by the great goodness of God be called ' it is not owing to the diligence of their pastors, all save a few of whom are ' dumbe or greedy dogs.'* *It is by 'extraordinary' means—by reading, or by chance residence in England where the Gospel is preached. And long may it be preached there!*

He said that the preachers of Wales need to be able to use the language of the people - Welsh where it is spoke; English where it is not (at that time in

Radnorshire, Monmouthshire and South Pembrokeshire, only). Also that lay preachers with a knowledge of divinity needed to be appointed if necessary. This particularly was hard to take by Whitgift and the other Anglican clerics. Penry also said that Welshmen in English pulpits should be transferred back to Wales. He continued: *'To-day we have not 12 in all our country that doe discharge their duety in any good sort.'* He also demanded that there should be single livings and compulsory residence - in other words, that a single clergyman would not receive the living of more than one parish to build up his own income, and that he should serve in the parish whose income he received instead of living elsewhere (often in England). He underscored also the need for the whole Bible to be available in the language of the Cymry - though this was an issue already being addressed, and William Morgan's great Welsh translation of the Bible, ordered by Queen Elizabeth herself, was even then in the process of being printed and made ready for publication.

Penry hoped that Welsh people would take note of recent judgements upon them (there had been occasions of severe drought as well as a very harsh winter, the combined results of which had been a very poor harvest and dying cattle, which he took to be a judgement from God. He hoped of the Welsh that *'Their calamities will compel them ' to unfould [their] grief unto her Majesty' and to 'this assembly.'* He appealed to them:

*'Throw down your selves before her majesty, and this honourable assembly, and plead for your homes and your peoples: rise not thence, until your suite be yielded unto.'*



*Memorial hanging in Llangammarch church*

In the light of this, it is no wonder that one of his biographers described John Penry as ‘the Evangelical Apostle of Wales’ as he, still only in his mid twenties, appealed ‘with a fiery zeal for the evangelization of his nation.’

On his release from prison, John Penry went to Northampton, and immediately began working on his next appeal, known in short as *'The Exhortation'*. He needed also to find a printer for what would now be regarded as illegal literature at a time when all printers had to be licensed. He found Robert Waldegrave, a London printer with strong Puritan sympathies, who had already been imprisoned for his work, and was used to sailing close to the wind.

*'The Exhortation'* was published April 1588, just a year after his release from prison. Pierce, John Penry's biographer, wrote concerning it:

*All Elizabethan Protestants and Puritans agreed in seeing no spiritual hope for the people of Wales while they remained in their ignorance. To Penry's imagination this dark doom made the outlook appalling, and explains the energy and outspokenness of his plea. The only practical remedy is to 'preach the word'; to expound it, to make it clear, to show the consequence of neglecting it, and the happy state of those receiving it and living according to its principles and precepts; to use all the arts, all the passion, of public speech in order to win his fellow-countrymen to accept the salvation proffered to men in the Gospel.*

The main themes, Pierce wrote, consisted of:

*'the Redemption of a condemned nation by the divinely-appointed method of preaching the Gospel; the need of being instant in season and out of season; and the demand for the proof of a converted life, in the devotion of that life to good works, and in all consistent conduct.'*

John Penry stated also that there was no town or parish, where for six months together during the last twenty-nine years (i.e.: the full extent of the queen's reign), there had been a godly and learned minister faithfully doing his duty in any reasonable sense. This was because the men appointed to the parishes were unqualified, and some were scandalously unfit to do their job.





*The porch at Cefn-brith*

Meanwhile, Waldegrave's printing press was raided and shut down, though not before he was himself able to escape with a font of type. John Penry helped him set up a new secret press, and further expanded editions of Exhortation were then produced at a secret location in East Molesey. It was here also that the infamous Martin Marprelate texts were printed, with which John Penry came to be associated, and for which involvement ultimately he was to lose his life. These texts were a strongly satirical commentary of the corruption of the church in the time of Elizabeth. As such, their style was completely at odds with John Penry's own. He could not have been their author, even though the authorities claimed that he was; though quite who penned them has never been identified.

A  
 Countercuffe giuen to Martin Iu-  
 nior : by the venturous, hardie, and  
 renowned Esq<sup>u</sup>ire of England,  
 Cassiers.

Not of olde Martins making, which newlie knighted  
 the Saints in Heauen, with rife vp Sir Peter and Sir Paule; But  
 lately dubd for his seruice at home in the defence of his  
 Country, and for the cleane breaking of his  
 staffe vpon Martins  
 face.



PRINTED,  
 Betweene the skye and the gronde,  
 Within a myle of an Oake, and not many fieldes  
 of, from the vnpraisledged Presse of the  
 All-ignos of Martins  
 Junior.  
 Anno. Dom. 1589.

*One of the Martin Marprelate Tracts*

March 1559 also saw the publication of Penry's 'Supplication':

*'... behold the mountaynes of Wales do now in the 31st yeare of the raigne of Queen Elizabeth call heaven and earth to witnes, that they are weary of the dumb ministers, non-residents, Lord Bishops, &c. and they desire to be watered by the dewe of Christ's holy Gospell, and to be compassed about with that beautiful wall of his holy government.'*

- I In this text John Penry identified two fundamental weaknesses in the administration of the church: firstly, the gospel is not preached; and secondly, the organisation of the church is corrupt. The passionate pleading is a million miles from the sarcasm of the Martin Marprelate texts:

*'And let me, craving upon my knees, with all submission and earnestness, and more earnest if it were possible to obtane, that my countrymen by your meanes may have the word preached, even the meanes whereby they may live for ever with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdome of heaven. Graunt them this my Lordes, though I dye for it. And this the Lord knoweth is the only scope of my writing, and not the discrediting or galling of Lorde Bishops.'*

Waldegrave refused to continue the printing of the Marprelate Tracts as things got increasingly uncomfortable, and the press was forced to relocate to a new hiding place after each publication. Even the Puritan fathers were becoming critical of the initiative.

Without Waldegrave, who went to Devon, the press was moved again and an unregistered printer named Hodgkins was persuaded to do the work. After printing two further Marprelate tracts, Hodgkins fled, but was arrested in Manchester, and the press was finally seized in August 1559.

Waldegrave meanwhile was in La Rochelle in France where he printed Penry's '*Appellation*'. John Penry himself went around Northampton disguised like a gallant, wearing a light-colored hat, a sword at his side, and a "long sky-colored cloak," edged with gold and silver and silk lace. Then on January 29th, 1589 an officer of the Archbishop searched John Penry's house at Northampton, ransacked his study, and took away with him some printed books and written papers. John Penry fled to Scotland, where he was joined by Waldegrave who had quit France. Helen Penry followed soon after, leaving their baby daughter Deliverance with her family in Northampton. A writ of banishment for John Penry was issued on 6th August 1590, preventing him from ever returning home without risking his life.

In the two and a half years that followed, two further works were produced in Edinburgh and printed by Waldegrave: '*A Brief Discovery*' and '*Reformation No Enemy*' (both published in 1590). These focussed on the headship of Christ over his church. Increasingly, John Penry's concern was moving from the necessity of the gospel being preached in the language of the people to criticism of unbiblical and worldly church government. He had come to understand that the former was prevented by the latter. Liberate the Church from the governance of men, and she will be free to be an instrument of the Kingdom of God. In short, John Penry was gradually becoming Wales's first congregationalist. But all the time, he continued to be aware that the people of Wales, even with a Bible by this time available in their own language, were living in ignorance because of a lack of good preaching to bring its meaning to their ears.



*Memorial to John Penry at Llangammarch*

As a result, after three years of safety, John Penry left Scotland for London 1592, aiming to get back to Wales in order to preach there himself.

Geraint Gruffydd wrote of Penry at this time: *'... his selflessness and altruism are apparent in all his works, and even at this time of retreat from the Reformed faith in which he lived and died, Welshmen will recognize that it was for what he considered to be his fellow-countrymen's highest good that he laid down his life the only reason why he left his safe sanctuary in Scotland, as he himself testified before his examiners, was in order that he might "imploye my smale talent in my poore cuntrye of Wales, where I knowe that the poore people perishe for want of knowledge"*.

John Penry left Edinburgh on his own, with his wife Eleanor and two children going on ahead by sea. He was by now strongly Separatist in his views, believing that the Anglican church was completely beyond redemption, and that she needed to be replaced by distinct, self-governing congregations of believers. Arriving in the capital, he joined a small illicit, persecuted church led by Francis Johnson, which was living in an atmosphere of revival, and which was meeting secretly in the forest outside the city in order to worship God. They were enduring significant levels of persecution, and many of them were already in prison.

Pierce writes: *'Something like a religious revival was quickening the scattered members of the persecuted Church. They came from all the parts of the City, threading their way under most difficult conditions, to their secret meetings, for worship and church fellowship, undeterred by the danger of imprisonment, ruinous fines, and the gallows. Only a people animated by the fire of the Spirit, would accept membership of the Church, under such perilous circumstances.*

This church reflected strongly the influence of the radical ideas of Henry Barrow (1550-1593) and John Greenwood (1554-1593). Barrow and Greenwood were disciples of the early Dissenter Robert Browne (1550-1633), the first to secede from the Church of England, who had set up a Dissenting congregation in Norwich as early as 1581, though he later returned to the Anglican fold.





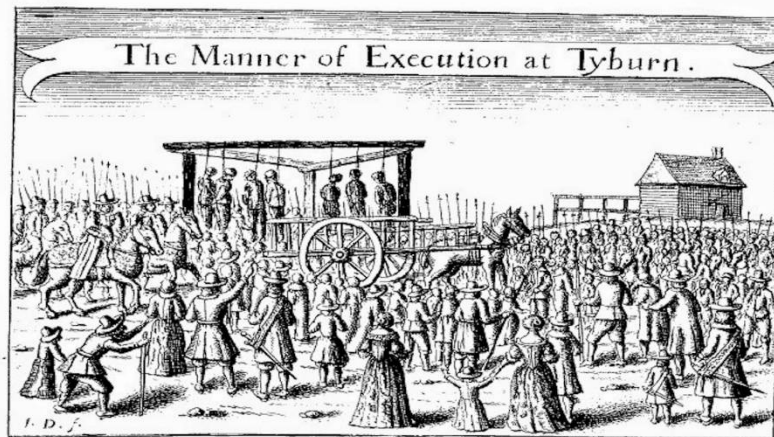
Robert Browne

Barrow and Greenwood viewed the established church as unbiblical in the way it was organised and run, and as being still too strongly tainted by Catholicism beyond the point of redemption. Between them they were developing a model of congregational church government which they felt reflected more closely the pattern of scripture, and gave greater allowance of headship of the church to Christ. The Barrowists, as they came to be known, wanted "to reduce all things and actions to the ancient and primitive pattern of God's word". They were the original Restorationists, if you like:

*Barrow preached a total separation from, and a rejection of the 'corrupted' churches. All of their clergy and its sacraments were held to be invalid, nor had they any true religion. Paedo-baptism was rejected for Believers Baptism. a public acclamation of faith by immersion. Rather than an episcopal; state church structure, a form of congregational polity modelled on the New Testament format was followed. Congregations were considered as independent religious institutions only subject to the vote of each member of the congregation ...*

*... True religion for the Barrowist could only be fostered in a new congregational structure outside of the control of the State or any other external authority. Total authority was to reside within each congregation to govern themselves by elections as independent religious bodies. The election of its ministers and elders would rest in the hands of the membership of each individual congregation. The administration of the congregation was delegated to its elected spiritual representatives: the Pastor, the Elders who assumed the day to day support, and duties of their congregation.*

Both Barrow and Greenwood would be martyred at Tyburn in 1593, just weeks before John Penry himself suffered the same fate, south of the river.



*The site of Tyburn today,  
at the junction of Edgware Road and Marble Arch*

On 4<sup>th</sup> March 1593 the Separatists were planning to meet in Islington Woods, then well outside the city, and the authorities found out about it. Fifty-six, about a third, of the church members were arrested, including Barrow, Greenwood and Penry. Penry managed to escape, however, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The remaining Separatists looked to Penry for help, and he wrote a petition arguing for the release of all fifty-six, together with twenty others of the church who had already been imprisoned. Meanwhile, Penry himself remained at large, evading capture for a further eighteen days.

John Penry possibly spent part of this time finishing his last book - a Separatist manifesto, which was subsequently published in 1609, sixteen years after his death. It ends suddenly, at the point at which he seems to have dropped his pen. Maybe this was even the moment when he fell into the hands of the authorities, after he had been recognised and followed in the street, and then betrayed on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1593 by the Vicar of Stepney. At the time of his arrest, John Penry's age was given as 'thirty or thereabouts'.

In the travesty of a trial following his arrest, Penry was at pains to stress his loyalty to Queen Elizabeth as the head of state, and that he was a loyal subject rather than a seditious disturber of government. Barrow and Greenwood, both at the top of Whitgift's list of troublers of the church, were executed in April 1593.

On the day that his two friends were hanged, Penry must have realised that the same fate now awaited him. It was on that very day, 6th April 1593, that he wrote a last letter, very moving letter to his wife. Four days later on 10th April, he wrote another long and profoundly moving letter to his four daughters, Deliverance, Comfort, Safety, and Sure-Hope, all aged under four at the time, with instructions they should be given it to read when they were old enough to understand. A final letter was written to his church on 24th April, entitled: *'To the Distressed Faithfull Congregation of Christ in London'*.

Five weeks later, on May 21, 1593 John Penry was put on trial on the charge of having "*feloniously devised and written certain words with intent to excite rebellion and insurrection in England.*" The fact that his book, *'Reformation, No Enemy'* was written and published Scotland made no difference.



*Faded road sign near Llangammarch pointing to the Penry home*

There were two separate indictments against John Penry. In the first, he is quoted from his private papers as having written that the Queen had turned against Christ, by preventing her subjects from serving God according to His word. The second indictment was based on a number of statements by Penry, to the effect that the ministers of state and of religion were denounced as conspirators against God as 'a troop of bloody soul-murderers, and sacrilegious church robbers', while the council is said to have 'delighted in persecuting God's true saints and ministers.' There is a bitterness to these words which probably reflects the fact that Penry had seen many friends arrested, tortured and kept in prison for long periods in the most dreadful conditions imaginable.

Claire Cross wrote about the way things proceeded from this point:



*When the prosecution began using information from private papers taken from him in Scotland, Penry appealed to Burghley against the injustice of the procedure, and the trial was suspended. At a new trial which began on 25 May the prosecution employed 'reformation No Enemie' as evidence against him, and he was pronounced guilty of publishing scandalous writings against the church. Although the indictment had made no mention of the Marprelate tracts, the conviction that Penry was Martin Marprelate lay behind his condemnation. On 28 May Penry addressed a final plea to Burghley to procure pardon from the queen, but Burghley could not help him. Early on 29 May 1593 Whitgift, Sir John Popham, and Sir John Puckering signed the death warrant, and later the same day Penry was hanged at St Thomas-a-Watering, Surrey.*

When the time came to die, John Penry had no due warning of what was to happen, but was seized at five o'clock in the afternoon, while in the middle of a meal, and taken out to be hanged. He was not allowed any last wishes, or given the freedom to protest his innocent or his loyalty to God and to the Queen, as he wished to be able to do. Nor were there any friends or family there to witness his end, just a few passing strangers. Those closest to him found out afterwards that he was dead.

Pierce provides some further detail:

*... in the midst of his meal, Penry without ceremony was hurried on to his hurdle and dragged to St. Thomas a Watering, where a gallows stood waiting its next victim. Having arrived there, Penry found no friend among the sprinkling of people who saw the grim cortege pass, and were drawn to the scene by their morbid curiosity. It was part of [Whitgift's] mean design to have none of the condemned man's friends present; and in any case, peremptory orders were issued to deny him the ordinary courtesy of the times, an opportunity at the gallows to bid farewell to the world, profess his innocence and loyalty....*



*The spot on the Old Kent Road where Penry was executed*

A final bitter irony involves the disposal of his body. For John Penry has no known burial place, and it has been suggested by some that his corpse was given to be buried under the name of another criminal who had stabbed a man to death in



a tavern nearby. That knife-man's name was Christopher Marlowe. The exchange, it has been suggested, was a plot initiated by the playwright to enable him to go scot free, and to change his identity, before he became the writer of several of the plays which today form part of the canon of a certain William Shakespeare. It's a theory.



*Christopher Marlowe*

We do not know what became of John Penry's wife Eleanor, nor what happened to three of his four daughters; though it is likely that Eleanor was involved in the publication of her dead husband's surviving papers in 1609. We do know that Deliverance, the eldest, served for a while in the home of Francis Johnson, the leader of the illicit London church, before quitting Britain for Netherlands, where she became a member of the English church in exile there. She married an English bombazine worker called Samuel Whitaker there in 1611.

The illicit London church continued to meet secretly, and some years later, in 1620, many of them were among those who fled Britain aboard the Mayflower looking for a new world in which they could experience the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences, and in line with the Word of God.

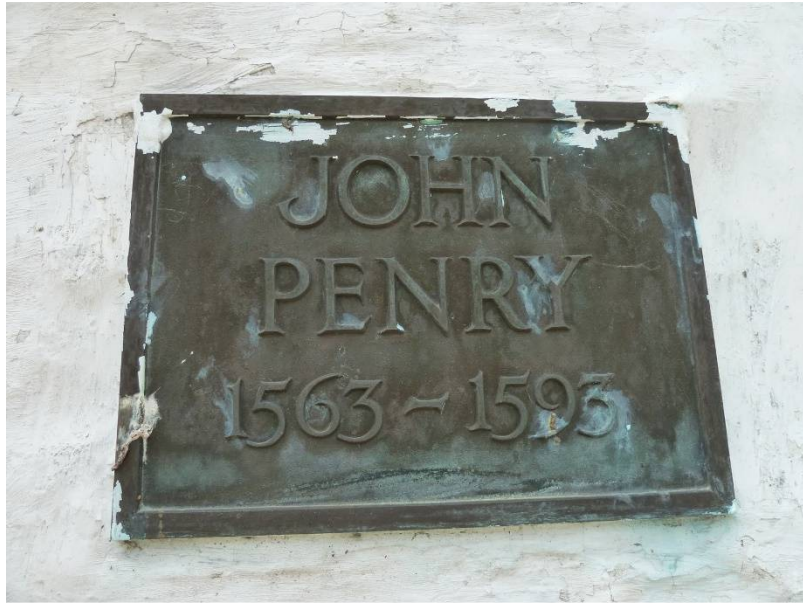


*The Pilgrim Fathers,  
among them possibly some who had known John Penry.*

In his final appraisal of John Penry, R Tudur Jones described John Penry as being 'hot-headed, intolerant and sectarian', and suggests that his contribution to Welsh religious life has been exaggerated in the past. His career certainly seems marked by a lack of caution in a time when any criticism of monarchy was dangerous and life-threatening. However, it needs to be recognised that his was a brave, lone prophetic voice calling for the proclamation of the Gospel in Wales at a time when the nation was largely benighted by ignorance and religious superstition. He was also way before his time in calling, with others in England, for a radical reformation of church structures in order to create the freedom for that Gospel to be proclaimed without restriction. As such he was the first Welsh disestablishmentarian, and the first Welsh congregationalist, more than a generation before the establishing of the first free church in Wales, by William Wroth at Llanfaches in 1638 - forty-five years after his death. He was a radical and passionate proclaimer of truth and is quite justifiably called 'the morning star of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales'. Though he campaigned for most of his adult life in England and Scotland, John Penry was one without doubt one of the greatest of Welsh spiritual leaders, and the nation still needs to honour him. Any man willing to lay down his life in order that his fellow-men may be able to hear the gospel freely proclaimed is worthy of great honour.

#### **Footnote**

The text of the letters John Penry wrote to his wife and daughters appears in the separate blog which follows.



*Plaque at Cefn-brith*

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Posted 16th July 2014 by [David Edward Pike](#)

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**This blog seeks to honour the work of the Holy Spirit in Wales through accounts of people, places and events connected with the development of Christianity and with revival from the early days of the Celtic saints onwards. If we honour what God has done in the past; and recognise, affirm, and engage with what he is doing in the present; we position ourselves for what he is going to do in the future.**



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