

Capel y Boro  
Sun 21 Feb 2021, 11am

**A Celebration of  
“Nantlais”:  
Poet, hymn-writer and  
torchbearer of the  
1904 Revival in  
Ammanford**



**Opening music:**

*Suai'r gwynt, sua'ir gwynt*  
(Nantlais)

**Intrada**

*O'r fath newid rhyfeddol a  
waned ynof fi*  
(*What a Wonderful Change*)  
(R H McDaniel cyf. Nantlais)

**Film, David, excerpt**  
(Paul Dickson, 1951)

**David Rees Griffiths, Amanwy**  
*The Old Valley* (Yr Hen Gwm)

**David Rees Griffiths, Amanwy**  
*Diary*  
Seeing Evan Roberts preach, 1904

*Yn dy law y mae f'amserau*  
(Nantlais, St Garmon)

**A talk by John Jones on  
William Nantlais Williams**

*Fe dorrodd y wawr, sancteiddier  
y dydd*  
(Nantlais, Hanover)

**Acts 2: 38-42**

The subject of Nantlais's sermon,  
Bethany, Ammanford, the weekend  
prior to Revd Joseph Jenkins' visit

**William Nantlais Williams**  
*Diary* – The moment of  
Nantlais's “conversion” as  
Joseph Jenkins visits Bethel,  
Ammanford, 1904, Excerpt I

**Luc 19: 1-10**

The subject of Joseph Jenkins's  
sermon, Bethany, Ammanford,  
from the following weekend

*Rho imi nerth i wneud fy rhan*  
(E A Dingley cyf. Nantlais,  
Richmond)

**Seth Joshua**

*Diary* – Seth Joshua visits  
Nantlais's chapel Bethany,  
Ammanford, 1904 (excerpt)

**William Nantlais Williams**  
*Yr Efen Ddiatalfa*  
from “Murmuron Newydd”

*Yn y Dwys ddistawrwydd*  
(*Speak Lord in the stillness*)  
(Emily M Grimes cyf. Nantlais)  
Côr Bro Aled

**William Nantlais Williams**  
*Diary* – The moment of  
Nantlais's “conversion” as  
Joseph Jenkins visits Bethel,  
Ammanford, 1904, Excerpt II

*Doubting Thomas:*  
**John 20: 24-31**

*Doubting Thomas:*  
**A talk by Stephen N Williams,**  
**Honorary Professor of**  
**Theology at Queen's**  
**University, Belfast**  
Grandson of Nantlais

*O'r fath gyfaill ydyw'r Iesu*  
(*What a friend we have in Jesus*)  
(Joseph Scriven cyf. Nantlais)

**Blessing**

**Closing video:**  
**Film David,**  
**final scene**  
(Paul Dickson, 1951)



William Nantlais Williams, 1904

**Opening music:**

*Suai'r gwynt, sua'ir gwynt*  
(Nantlais)

An arrangement for voice and  
guitar of one of Nantlais's many  
hymns, a beautiful lullabye carol.  
All our hymns this morning set  
either texts or translations by  
Nantlais.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXMh2wFBACE>

**Intrada**

Ysbryd y tragwyddol Dduw,  
disgyn arnom ni; Ysbryd y  
tragwyddol Dduw, disgyn arnom  
ni: plyg ni, trin ni, golch ni, cod ni;  
Ysbryd y tragwyddol Dduw,  
disgyn arnom ni.

*Spirit of the eternal God, descend  
upon us; Spirit of the eternal God,  
descend upon us:  
fold us, treat us, wash us, raise us:  
Spirit of the eternal God, descend  
upon us.*

**Welcome to our service this** morning from Capel y Boro in which we celebrate the writings and hymns of the great preacher William Nantlais Williams and we focus on the 1904 revival as it made its way to the former coal-mining town of Ammanford, Carmarthenshire. We start by singing the first of our Nantlais hymns now, this one a translation of "What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart" by the American hymn writer Rufus Henry McDaniel.

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**O'r fath newid rhyfeddol a wnaed ynof fi,**

daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw;  
torrodd gwawr ar fy enaid,  
atebwyd fy nghri,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw.

*Daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw,  
cwyd llawenydd fy mron megis ton  
ar ôl ton,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw.*

O'm holl lwybrau afradlon  
dychwelwyd fy nhraed,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw;  
ac fe olchwyd fy meiau di-rif yn ei  
waed,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw.

Y mae gobaith fy enaid yn ddiogel  
yn awr,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw;  
ac fe chwalwyd pob cwmwl,  
mae'r ffordd fel y wawr,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw.

Collodd angau ei fraw, y mae  
golau'n y glyn,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw;  
y mae'r llwybyr i'r ddinas  
dragwyddol yn wyn,  
daeth Iesu i'm calon i fyw.

*What a wonderful change  
in my life has been wrought  
Since Jesus came into my heart;  
I have light in my soul  
for which long I had sought,  
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

*Chorus: Since Jesus came into my  
heart, Since Jesus came into my  
heart; Floods of joy o'er my soul  
like the sea billows roll,  
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

*I have ceased from my wand'ring  
and going astray, Since Jesus came  
into my heart; And my sins which  
were many are all washed away,  
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

*I'm possessed of a hope  
that is steadfast and sure,  
Since Jesus came into my heart;  
And no dark clouds of doubt  
now my pathway obscure,  
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

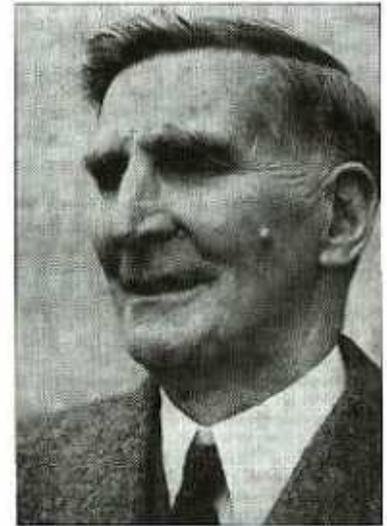
*There's a light in the valley  
of death now for me,  
Since Jesus came into my heart;  
And the gates of the City  
beyond I can see,  
Since Jesus came into my heart.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZ6eIfBVZlY>

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**William Nantlais Williams** (who was born in Pencader, Carmarthenshire in 1874 and died in 1959), better known simply as *Nantlais*, was a Welsh poet and Christian minister who played a prominent role in the 1904-1905 Welsh Revival. John will say more about him in his talk a bit later on but first we are going to hear about one of his contemporaries from the same area who would certainly have been familiar with his work and like Nantlais would have been

caught up in the extraordinary events of the 1904 revival in South Wales.



David Rees Griffiths

**David Rees Griffiths** (who was born in Betws, Carmarthenshire in 1882 and died in 1953), was also known by his bardic name of *Amanwy*. He was a Welsh poet, and an older brother of politician Jim Griffiths who became the first Secretary of State for Wales. David Rees Griffiths was the son of a blacksmith and the fifth of ten children. He spent his working life as a coal miner, beginning work in 1894 at the age of eight, after a brief education at the local primary school. His father's smithy remained a gathering point for local intellectuals and political activists. In 1908 David was badly injured in a colliery explosion, which killed one of his brothers. In 1919 he published his first volume of poetry. The profits from the edited volume in 1924 went towards helping the historian and preacher Rev. Gomer Morgan Roberts to supplement his scholarship to Fircroft Adult College near Birmingham. Griffiths edited the volume of selected works from local miners and it 'easily sold a

thousand copies' for a shilling each and gave the 24-year-old Roberts £30 to help support him.

In 1910, Griffiths won his first eisteddfod chair, going on to win a further fifty in local events. In the same year, his wife Margaret died of tuberculosis. Griffiths also had a career as a journalist, writing for the *Amman Valley Chronicle* and also for BBC Radio. In 1927, he travelled to South Africa along with his son Gwilym, who was also suffering from tuberculosis from which Gwilym would die in 1935. In 1928, Griffiths became caretaker at the local grammar school.

*David*, a short film based on Griffiths's life, was made as part of the celebrations for the 1951 Festival of Britain and included music by the Barry composer Grace Williams. Griffiths, or *Amanwy*, starred in the film as himself. The clip we are going to see now shows the young David Rees Griffiths, played by Ieuan Davies, in Ammanford in 1910, just six years after the revival, when Bethany in Ammanford, Nantlais's chapel, was at the heart of the community.

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### Film, *David*, excerpt 1

(Paul Dickson, 1951)

(Scenes depicting Ammanford in 1910)



<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-david-1951-online>  
(18:22-20:05)

*In this clip David Rees Griffiths shows us the contrast between the hard work in the coal mines and the recreation and spiritual fulfilment of the circus and the chapel. And now in "The Old Valley" by David Rees Griffiths, 'Amanwy', we hear a similar contrast drawn between life in the coal mine and the dreams of life outside it*

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### David Rees Griffiths, *Amanwy The Old Valley*

(translated from *Yr Hen Gwm*)

An icy morning fog that chills the bone,  
A bitter wind that lifts the mist on Garth,  
These my companions on this wintry day.  
And as I cross the valley to the mine,  
The freezing river Amman now my guide,  
My heart beats louder than a hammer's thud.

A nervous question forms upon my lips –  
"All safe and well today down at the face?"  
The fireman nods, the level beckons to ....  
The longest mile a man will ever walk,  
My feet like lead before the shift begins.  
The jacket off, and then my shirt and vest,  
And pick and shovel go to work at last  
Before my raucous singing fills the air.

Sings ...

"There's a girl from the Hendy I'll win by and by  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!

Her song is as sweet as the lark's in the sky  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!  
Her step is as light as the hind on the hill;  
The gold of her hair from the sun takes its fill;  
But her tongue is as sharp as the salt of the sea.  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!

There's a collier from Betws with a look in his eye  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!  
And an ache in his heart, heaving sigh after sigh  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!  
Heaven for him is to wait for his love  
By the ash trees of Hafod, at the gate of the grove,  
And to taste of the honey that's found in her kiss.  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!

On the day of All Saints, with its mist and its rain  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!  
A ring on her finger my love will proclaim  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!  
At the foot of the Twrcan, in a small cottage there, ....  
We will weave into dreams all the hopes that we share  
And change into song all life's woe and life's care.  
.....Heave ho! Out with the coal!



## Film, *David*, excerpt I

(Paul Dickson, 1951)

(Scene depicting the National Eisteddfod, Aberafan, 1932)

*David Rees Griffiths went on to be a caretaker at Ammanford Valley Grammar School. In the 1951 film of his life "David" the most poignant section deals with the impact on David of the death of his son, Gwilym, from tuberculosis, and the effect on his pupils of the caretaker's temporary estrangement from them as he retreats into himself and his memories. David is also shown at the National Eisteddfod in Aberafan in 1932 where his poem, an elegy to his dead son, was in consideration for a prize.*

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-david-1951-online>  
(28:54 -32:44)

*One of the most remarkable accounts Amanwy gave us was of his experience of travelling from his home in Betws near Ammanford to see the revivalist who we featured in our service two weeks ago Evan Roberts preaching in Loughor in 1904:*



Evan Roberts

## David Rees Griffiths, *Amanwy Diary*

From Betws to Loughor to see Evan Roberts preach, 1904

We had a brief chat before we entered the chapel, and we were warned by the eldest among us to keep a tight rein on our emotions lest we should make fools of ourselves in the chapel. We entered quietly and found a seat in the pew nearest the door. There seemed to be no order to the service, but no one took heed of this, and in the midst of the prayers and rejoicing, there were long periods of complete silence. We all felt a strange influence upon us and we looked at one another without uttering a single word. Then at about three o' clock, in the midst of the singing, Evan Roberts himself entered the sêf fawr. He knelt beneath the pulpit and he was soon joined by a dozen other people in quiet devotional prayer. The silence left us all in a state of awe. The evangelist then got to his feet and slowly climbed the stairs to the pulpit.

This was our first opportunity to have a clear view of him. The only unusual feature about him were his eyes, which seemed to be full of passion. Then lifting the Bible slowly, he ran his fingers nervously over its pages and said quietly, without any emotion: Tears will flow here this afternoon, tears which we will not see, but God will see them all. Shedding tears is not a weakness but strength. If you have not wept with the Gospel, there is every reason to believe that you have not lived the Gospel. Kneel at the foot of His Cross in tears'. Several members of the congregation were now

sobbing quietly, and the revivalist's eyes lit up with a strange light. He pointed his finger from pew to pew, both downstairs and on the gallery, and scores of people knelt, one after another, pleading for forgiveness. It was a strange sight, which I still find difficult to comprehend and describe – but our hearts were as heavy as lead that afternoon. We returned to Betws that evening, but we spoke but little. Our experiences were far too sacred to share even with our closest friends and family.

*Amanwy was also a member of Ammanford's rugby club, but when the revival hit, most of the team were strongly impacted by it. As a result, an extraordinary meeting of the club was hastily organised at which the majority of the team members said that they felt they could never play a game of rugby ever again. Some of the members even went so far as to burn their rugby kit. At the meeting, it was decided to disband the club, and terminate its membership of the WRU. The club remained in mothballs until 1907. Here they are pictured from 1911:*



*In subsequent weeks, the Revival spread out from Ammanford as a focal point, to the whole of the Amman Valley to the east, into the neighbouring Swansea Valley, north up as far as Llandeilo, south to Pontarddulais and Pontardawe, and west to Gorslas and Cross Hands. Ammanford itself continued to be a centre of open-air preaching and*

testimony, and teams entered the pubs to witness to the love of God. Nantlais records what happened when he took a group of young people with him to share in the pubs. They visited the Dynevor Arms in Pantyffynnon, (pictured below), not far from Nantlais's own home. The young girls who accompanied the minister spontaneously fell on their knees in the bar and started to pour out their hearts in passionate prayer. One man threw his beer into the fireplace; others walked out; while some put down their beers and joined in the prayers.



**Yn dy law y mae famserau,**  
 ti sy'n trefnu 'nyddiau i gyd,  
 ti yw lluniwr y cyfnodau,  
 oesoedd a blynyddoedd byd;  
 rho dy fendith  
 ar y flwyddyn newydd hon.

Yn dy law y mae famserau,  
 oriau'r bore a'r prynhawn,  
 ti sy'n rhoddi y tymhorau,  
 amser hau a chasglu'r grawn;  
 gad im dreulio  
 oriau'r flwyddyn yn dy waith.

Yn dy law y mae famserau,  
 amser gwynfyd, amser croes,  
 amser iechyd digymylau  
 a chysgodion diwedd oes;  
 gad im mwyach  
 dreulio 'nyddiau yn dy law.

*In my hand are my times,  
 you organize all my days,  
 you are the maker of the periods,  
 ages and years of the world;  
 bless you this new year.*

*In your hand are my times, the*

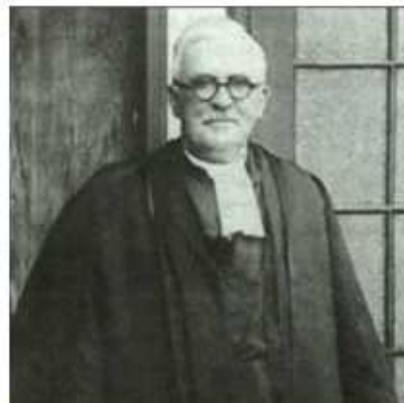
*hours of the morning and the  
 afternoon, you who give the  
 seasons, the time of sowing and the  
 gathering of the grain;  
 let me spend hours of the year at  
 work.*

*In your hand are my times, the  
 time of joy, the time of the cross,  
 the time of the health of clouds  
 and the shadows of the end of life;  
 let me no longer spend your days in  
 your hand.*

<https://hymnary.org/hymn/SCM/4817> (Press arrow by 'Audio recording' top of left column)

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### A talk by John Jones on William Nantlais Williams



William Nantlais Williams, in later life

Nantlais was an important Welsh hymn writer with no fewer than 17 of his hymns included in *Caneuon Fydd*.

Born William *Nantlais* Williams in Pencader in deepest Carmarthenshire, he was a Calvinistic Methodist preacher who spent over 40 years as minister of Bethany chapel in Ammanford.

He was profoundly affected by the 1904 Welsh Revival and played a prominent role in it. At the age of 20 he began to preach and attended the prestigious

grammar school in Newcastle Emlyn in 1895 that Evan Roberts had also been at, then went to Treveca to prepare for ordination. While still a student he managed to publish a collection of poems and wrote several hymns for children, such as *Beth yw Mesur Glas y Nen*.

He was a successful conference speaker and award-winning poet including the Chair at the National Eisteddfod in 1902 and, curiously at an eisteddfod in the Queen's Hall in London in 1904. But he put an end to his competitive work following the breakout of the Revival, which happened in Ammanford on the weekend of 4th November 1904. He then concentrated on producing Christian literature and his pastoral duties. He lived during an age that saw Wales becoming increasingly secularised and he was adamant in retaining the theology and the authority of scripture handed down from the Methodist fathers. He became closely associated with Revivalist leaders such as Seth Joshua and was determined to continue the evangelical fervour of that weekend in Ammanford. Did he meet Evan Roberts though, I wonder? It's not clear that he did and perhaps we'll never know, but my guess is that he did. Nantlais received an honorary M.A. from the University of Wales for his contribution to Christian literature in 1958 and died, a year later, in Ammanford where he was buried in front of Bethany chapel.

His hymn, *Fe dorrodd y wawr, sancteiddier y dydd*, celebrates the resurrection and based on Saint Mark's gospel and is sung here to the hymn tune, Hanover:

**Fe dorrodd y wawr,**  
sancteiddier y dydd,  
fe ddrylliwyd yr iau, mae'r  
Cadarn yn rhydd,  
fe gododd y Ceidwad, boed  
moliant i Dduw,  
fe goncrwyd marwolaeth, mae'r  
lesu yn fyw!

Cyhoedder y gair, atseinier y sôn,  
a thrawer y salm soniarus ei  
thôn,  
dywedwch wrth Seion alarus a  
gwyw  
am sychu ei dagrau, mae'r lesu yn  
fyw!

*The dawn broke, the day was  
sanctified,  
the yoke was broken, the Firm is  
free,  
the Keeper rose, may God be  
praised,  
death was conquered, Jesus is alive!  
Announce the word, resonate the  
word,  
and transcend the tuneful psalm of  
its tone,  
tell a grieving Zion and wail  
about wiping away her tears, Jesus  
is alive!*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dU3khUtl54o>

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*Nantlais wrote of a meeting held at Bethany as early as August 1904 attended by David Thomas, the schoolmaster of Penmorfa, a place not far from Newquay where early signs of a revival were taking place. Nantlais later wrote that the highlight of the meeting came with Thomas 'venturing to tell us the story of what was going on in New Quay until we were astounded and our hearts glowed. That was the first fruit of the revival for us in Ammanford, the luggage we received in advance.' Nantlais had already, a very long time before,*

*invited Joseph Jenkins to come and speak at Bethany. The visit had been booked for mid-November 1904, and it would happen just as the outpouring of the Spirit was beginning a few miles to the south in Loughor under the ministry of Evan Roberts. In the meanwhile, Nantlais began a series looking at the history of past revivals that had happened in Wales, to help prepare the way, but the intensity of people's longing abated considerably in the weeks leading up to the November visit of Jenkins.*



*The weekend before Joseph Jenkins (pictured above) was due, Nantlais preached at Bethany on Acts 2:*

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#### **Acts 2: 38-42**

The subject of Nantlais's sermon, Bethany, Ammanford, the weekend prior to Revd Joseph Jenkins's visit

Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this

corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

*Nantlais's sermon had considerable impact and it was suggested that prayer meetings be held every evening for the coming week, and these were exceptionally well-attended.*

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#### **William Nantlais Williams Diary – The moment of Nantlais's "conversion" as Joseph Jenkins visits Bethel, Ammanford, 1904, Excerpt I**

"The Tuesday night after Mr Jenkins left, the sun rose in its power at Ammanford ... At a packed prayer meeting that evening, there was no need for anyone to lead because the infallible Leader had taken the helm. About ten o'clock a young girl in the corner to the right of the big seat rose to her feet and prayed with an explosive passion until a Pentecostal cloud broke over her. It poured out its contents everywhere, until everyone lost control and turned to praying, yes, and shouting, some asking forgiveness, some giving thanks, and some praising – everyone in a confusion doing something. Never before had we seen such a holy disorder in a religious meeting. But, despite all the disorder of the meeting, no clash of spirit was felt there. A beautiful harmony was felt in the confessing, praying and praising. The quiet thanksgiving heard here and the broken-hearted cry sounding over there were in the

same sweet counterpoint as are the tender tinkle of the harp and the trombone's strident notes in an orchestra. The harsh sounds of self were nowhere to be heard. The meeting continued until half-past two in the morning."

*When Jenkins came to preach the following weekend, he preached from Luke 19.10: 'For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' and referred to the story of Zacchaeus in Luke, particularly stressing Jesus' words 'make haste to come down.'*

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### Luc 19: 1-10

The subject of Joseph Jenkins's sermon, Bethany, Ammanford, from the following weekend

Yr oedd wedi dod i mewn i Jericho, ac yn mynd trwy'r dref. Dyma ddyn o'r enw Sacheus, un oedd yn brif gasglwr trethi ac yn ŵr cyfoethog, yn ceisio gweld p'run oedd Iesu; ond yr oedd yno ormod o dyrfa, ac yntau'n ddyn byr. Rhedodd ymlaen a dringo sycamorwydden er mwyn gweld Iesu, oherwydd yr oedd ar fynd heibio y ffordd honno. Pan ddaeth Iesu at y fan, edrychodd i fyny a dweud wrtho, "Sacheus, tyrdd i lawr ar dy union; y mae'n rhaid imi aros yn dy dŷ di heddiw." Daeth ef i lawr ar ei union a'i groesawu yn llawen. Pan welsant hyn, dechreuodd pawb rwnnach ymhlith ei gilydd gan ddweud, "Y mae wedi mynd i letya at ddyn pechadurus." Ond safodd Sacheus yno, ac meddai wrth yr Arglwydd, "Dyma hanner fy eiddo, syr, yn rhodd i'r tlodion; os mynnais arian ar gam gan neb, fe'i talaf yn ôl bedair gwaith." "Heddiw," meddai Iesu wrtho, "daeth iachawdwriaeth i'r tŷ hwn,

oherwydd mab i Abraham yw'r gŵr hwn yntau. Daeth Mab y Dyn i geisio ac i achub y colledig."

*He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'*

*In applying the message, Jenkins encouraged the people, saying 'take your being to fall humbly at his feet with good grace now'. which struck home forcefully in the hearts of those listening. Eifion Evans said: 'The sentence gripped the hearts of many and was to be used during the ensuing week. A heavenly nearness to God was felt by all present, and although there was no public outcry, the weeping was general throughout the congregation.' At the end of the meeting, Nantlais announced that there would be an additional prayer meeting at 5pm, after the afternoon meeting. He was not sure how*

*many would attend this extra meeting, but he need not have worried. He later wrote: 'Well, when I reached the vestry, to my astonishment it was packed full. The first light of dawn had come. The hilltops were rejoicing, and the sun was quickly drawing nigh.'*

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### Rho imi nerth i wneud fy rhan,

i gario baich fy mrawd,  
i weini'n dirion ar y gwan  
a chynorthwyo'r tlawd.

Ehanga 'mryd a gwared fi  
rhag culni o bob rhyw,  
rho imi weld pob mab i ti  
yn frawd i mi, O Dduw.

Gad imi weld dy wyneb-pryd  
yng ngwedd y llesg a'r gwael,  
a gwranddo'r cwyn nas clyw y byd  
er mwyn dy gariad hael.

Give me strength to do my bit,  
to carry my brother's burden,  
to serve our kindly on the weak  
and assist the poor.

Expand my desire and deliver me  
from the narrowness of all sexes,  
let me see you every son  
my brother, O God.

Let me see your face when  
in the eyes of the weak and the  
poor,  
and listen to the complaint that the  
world has not heard  
for the sake of your generous love.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNNoVovh5GVk>

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*It was a week after these tumultuous chapel meetings, and a week after Nantlais had fully surrendered himself to the Lord and been filled with the Holy Spirit, that*

*Seth Joshua was due to be in Ammanford. , Sunday was the first day of a week-long visit to Nantlais's church by Joshua, the Forward movement evangelist from Cardiff who had presided over the meeting in Blaenannerch a few weeks earlier in which Evan Roberts had been baptised with the Spirit.*

### **Seth Joshua**

**Diary – Seth Joshua visits**

**Nantlais's chapel**

**Bethany, Ammanford, 1904**

**(excerpt)**



Seth Joshua

*20th November (Sunday): This has been one of the most remarkable days of my life. Even in the first morning meeting a number were led to embrace the Saviour. In the afternoon the blessing fell upon scores of young people. The crush was very great to get into the chapel.*

*At seven o'clock a surging mass filled the Christian Temple and crowds were unable to gain entrance. The Holy Spirit was indeed among the people. Numbers confessed Jesus, but it is impossible to count.*

*21st (Monday): We had great blessing this evening. The chapel was full of people and of God's power. Some most remarkable conversions took place. It is impossible to count. They fly like a cloud of doves to their windows. Many prayed aloud. At one time in the service there was a hush such as I shall never forget. The power at that time was divine.*

*Tuesday 22nd: A snow storm prevented many from attending the meeting at Bethany that evening. Nevertheless, it was a splendid audience and divine life sprang up ... The doctrine of assurance is getting a deeper hold upon the people and many are being established.' Afterwards, in spite of the build-up of snow, people remained in the street outside the chapel singing hymns until well after midnight.*

*24th (Thursday): There were at least twenty conversions in tonight's meeting. It was a most remarkable service. The fire burned with great power. Again the people sang in the streets, and the service went on until nearly midnight, although it was freezing and the snow lay thick on the ground.*

*26th (Saturday): Today we visited Llandeilo. About twenty came with us. We sang in the Market Square, and then marched through the town. We held a meeting in the Town Hall. I caught a chill. It increased so much that my teeth chattered. I went straight to bed upon arriving back at Ammanford.*

*The following day, Seth Joshua was too ill to participate at Bethany, and his wife had to come from Cardiff*

*by train to fetch his home. He was ill for a few weeks, and confined to bed, unable to be involved in the outbreak of the Revival in his own city, but glorying in the reports he read in the press of what was going on around him.*

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### **William Nantlais Williams** **Yr Elfen Ddiatalfa** **from "Murmuron Newydd"**

Llifa Tywi'n daw  
el heibio,  
Llifo heibio mae erioed;  
Nid oes dim a'i denodd eto  
I gartrefu dan y coed.

Gwelais y briallu'n tyrru  
I lygadu ar ei hol,  
Adar hwythau'n ceisio i denu  
I ymdroi ar hyd y ddôl.

Gwelais heulwen am ei sychu  
A chmylau'n cloi eu stôr;  
Y cornentydd yn ei gwadu,  
Hithau'n mynd o hyd i'r môr.

Ambell ddydd o anghytundeb  
Chwery croeswynt ar ei thon,  
Crychu'n ol mae dŵr ei hwyneb  
Cyrchu 'mlaen mae lli ei bron.

Dyna'r elfen ddiatalfa:  
Dyna'r anorchfygol li:  
Dyna'r allwedd i Galfaria:  
Dyna'r gras a'm ceisiodd i.



*The Stand-alone element*

*Tywi quietly passed by,  
It always flows past;*

*There is nothing that has attracted  
him yet  
To live under the trees.*

*I saw the primroses fluttering  
To look after her,  
Birds trying to attract  
To meander along the meadow.*

*I saw sunshine for drying it  
And clouds lock their store;  
The cornices deny her,  
She finds the sea.*

*Some days of disagreement  
A hurricane blew on its wave,  
Her face is watering back  
Sourcing on is her heart.*

*That's the stand-alone element:  
That's the irresistible flow:  
That's the key to Calvary:  
That is the grace that sought me.*

*Nantlais had been an accomplished  
poet but he put an end to his  
competitive work following the  
breakout of the Revival, when it  
happened as we have just been  
hearing in Ammanford on the  
weekend of 4 November 1904.  
Perhaps his most famous poem of  
the early career was "Murmuron y  
Nant" ("Murmurs of the Brook")  
published in 1898. But Nantlais did  
publish a volume of poems in 1926  
"Murmuron Newydd" which  
includes this poem "Yr Elfen  
Ddiatalfa."*

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## Prayers

Just before we go into our final section of the service let us take a moment to pray for those who are suffering at this time and for those who have sadly departed. We think of all of them, their loved ones and friends. This week we think of Catharina joining us today and for those

close to her who have sadly died in the last two weeks Mike, Lily, Ann, David and Sjean. We pray for them all. Oh Lord give us the strength that we need so much now and your unending love.

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## Yn y dwys ddistawrwydd

*dywed air, fy Nuw;  
torred dy leferydd  
taidd ar fy nghlyw.*

*O fendigaid Athro,  
el yw yr awr;  
gad im weld dy wyneb,  
doed dy nerth i lawr.*

*Ysbryd, gras a bywyd  
yw dy eiriau pur;  
portha fi â'r bara  
sydd yn fwyd yn wir.  
Dysg fi yng ngwybodaeth  
dy ewyllys lân;  
nerth dy gariad ynof  
dry dy ddeddfau'n gân.*

*Megis gardd ddyfradwy,  
o aroglau'n llawn,  
boed fy mywyd, Arglwydd,  
fore a phrynhawn.*

*In the profound silence  
say a word, my God;  
your  
holy speech shall be broken upon  
my hearing.*

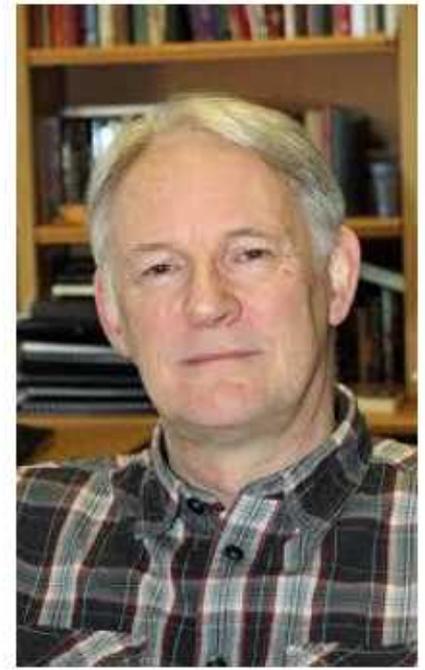
*O blessed Teacher,  
quiet is the hour;  
let me see your face,  
let your strength come down.*

*Spirit, grace and life  
are your pure words;  
feed me with the bread  
that is true food.*

*Teach me in the knowledge of  
your clean will;  
the strength of thy love in  
thy statutes be song.*

*Like a watery garden,  
full of smell, may  
my life, Lord, be  
morning and afternoon.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m7bSI5559A>



**Stephen Nantlais Williams**, one of the world's leading theologians, is Honorary Professor of Theology at Queen's University, Belfast. Stephen would have been seven or eight when Nantlais passed away. Stephen's father was the great philosopher of religion Rheinallt Nantlais Williams.

His current field of study is "researching the connection between a Christian understanding of creation and philosophies undergirding developments in artificial intelligence." His books include *Revelation and Reconciliation: A Window on Modernity* and *The Election of Grace: A Riddle Without a Resolution?* It is a great honour to have him with us today. In a few moments he is going to give us a talk but first he is going to

read from his grandfather's account, continuing from the passage Simon Hughes read earlier on Joseph Jenkins coming to Bethel Ammanford in 1904. And this is perhaps the part of his writing where he conveys the point at which he fully understands his own baptism into the Holy Spirit.

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**William Nantlais Williams  
Diary – The moment of  
Nantlais's "conversion" as  
Joseph Jenkins visits Bethel,  
Ammanford, 1904, Excerpt II**

"The meetings would go on until one or two o'clock in the morning, and souls would be set at liberty every night. Yet I myself had not found the blessing. I spent one whole night knocking and pleading at the door of mercy. That was on Friday night, after an amazing meeting in the chapel. But nothing availed. I was still in fetters. On Saturday night in the chapel the multitude came together again, and the new-born ones sang triumphantly: 'Diolch iddo byth am gofio llwch y llawr' (Thanks be to Him for ever remembering the dust of the earth). I decided within myself to join in the singing; though I had not myself received the blessing, should I not rejoice that others were free of their bonds? Yes, I broke out to join in the praise, and in that act of giving thanks for others, like Job of old: And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.' Yes, I began to experience the liberty in the meeting, and after I reached the house and meditated, I saw that it was though believing that the blessing comes, not through the worthiness of any effort of mine

in deed or prayer. 'By grace ye are saved through faith.' I realised now by experience what the way of salvation was."

*As Nantlais says it is through believing that the blessing comes and in the story of Doubting Thomas it says in John: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."*

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Caravaggio *The Incredulity of Thomas*,  
Sanssouci Picture Gallery, Potsdam,  
Germany

*Doubting Thomas:*  
**John 20: 24-31**

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those

who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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*Doubting Thomas:*  
**A talk by Stephen N  
Williams, Honorary  
Professor of at Queen's  
University, Belfast**

Richard Dawkins has remarked that 'Doubting Thomas' was the only admirable member of the band of disciples. Only he refused to accept something on faith and insisted on the importance of taking up a critical attitude. Is Richard Dawkins right? Yes, in a very limited respect. Certainly, critical thinking is important. Credulity is not a virtue. Doubt, in the right place, is healthy and good. But as for Thomas himself, let us take a look, and then consider matters of faith and doubt a bit more widely.

We should put ourselves in Thomas' shoes. Firstly, he is a Jewish believer in God, so he believes in a God of power and of wonders. Secondly, he has heard Jesus prophesy that he would arise from the dead although, to be fair to him, other disciples didn't immediately understand at the time what Jesus meant (Mark 9:10). Thirdly, he has seen Jesus perform miracles. Fourthly, he presumably realizes that his companions, the

fellow-disciples, are not joking. So why exactly was it reasonable for him to doubt? Was he saying that his eyesight was better than theirs? Had he found them all to be more gullible than he was? Evidently, it's not reasonable to doubt everything unless you've seen it for yourself. Imagine what would happen if juries behaved like that in a court of law. Now, of course, there you are usually dealing with ordinary events. The resurrection appearance of Jesus is no ordinary event. So it's understandable if someone needs more evidence than in the case of an ordinary event. If Thomas had said: 'Are you quite, quite sure?' or: 'Do you think what you think you saw could be explained in [such and such] other ways?', then perhaps his doubt would have been reasonable. But notice his words (I paraphrase): 'Unless I directly for myself have proof by observation and touch, I will never believe' (John 20:25). Doesn't that sound more like someone who is stubborn than someone intellectually open?

Some find problematic not just the incident itself but Jesus's following words: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (29). Isn't that a recipe for credulity – disastrous blind faith? Not at all. Jesus is being realistic. He knows that only that one particular generation can have direct evidence of the eyesight in the way the disciples had. Jesus is not saying that evidence is unimportant, that faith must be blind. Rather, none of us who belong to the generations after the event are in a position to see with our own eyes. But we are called to believe the testimony of the eyes of others.

'Yes', it may be objected, 'but surely we still need to learn something from Thomas. You are assuming that these New Testament records are reliable. Is that just being credulous?' I think not. Of course, we're in no position to check the accounts for ourselves. But what is significant is that they were written in such a way that those who were around at the time could check them. Read Luke 1:1-4. Luke tells Theophilus: '(a) you've been taught certain things but you don't have to believe them just because you've been taught them; (b) I've undertaken my own investigation; (c) I've set down in an orderly fashion the results of my investigation.' The way he sounds, I'm not surprised that he was supposed to be a physician! Luke lays out the data for others to check, best they could. And he is not alone in doing so. Paul invites people to check his story (1 Corinthians 15:6). So although I can't check up directly, several centuries on, I can tell that the New Testament writers want to present a well-grounded faith, not a blind one.

It's true, of course, that faith is not just a matter of the head. You know that from your Sundays in Borough looking into the matter of revival in Wales. But there is more scepticism around in our time than there was in that time, so if we can show that faith is not irrational – that we need to get a right perspective on doubting Thomas – it should at least get us to first base. And how important that is! There are people outside the churches with a heart-longing to believe, but regret the fact that religion (or Christianity) is

irrational. What a sad misunderstanding! And there are people inside the churches who have faith, but are not confident that it can stand the test of reason, so they do not share it. What a sad deprivation! We need to engage with doubting Thomas. Jesus asked this question: 'Who do you say that I am?' (Matthew 16:15). Taking that question seriously engages our whole being – mind, will and depths of heart. No question is more important to answer and it's the last question we must avoid. After the Thomas incident, John tells us that he's written his book 'so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (20:31). Overcoming doubt can get us at least to first base, a first point. Once we get there, we see a road before us marked with a big sign: 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6). Actually, doubting Thomas, that man of extremes, went further. 'My Lord and my God' (20:28). And that extreme was the right place to go.

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**O'r fath gyfaill ydyw'r Iesu,**  
ffrind ymhob ystorom gref;  
O'r fath fraint yw mynd â'r cyfan  
yn ein gweddi ato ef.  
O'r tangnefedd pur a gollwn,  
O'r pryderon 'rŷm yn dwyn,  
am na cheisiwn fynd yn gyson  
ato ef i ddweud ein cwyn.

A oes gennym demtasiynau?  
A oes gofid mewn un man?  
Peidiwn byth â digalonni  
gwrendy Iesu weddi'r gwan.  
Cyfaill yw sy'n dal yn ffyddlon,  
cydymdeimlo mae â'n llef,  
gŵyr yr Iesu am ein gwendid  
awn â'r cwbl ato ef.

Pwy sy'n teimlo yn drwmlwythog  
o dan faich euogrwydd cas?  
Iesu'n unig yw ein noddfa –  
awn â'n cri at orsedd gras.  
A oes ffrindiau'n cefnu arnat?  
Dwed dy gŵyn wrth Frenin heddi:  
yn ei freichiau cei dawelwch  
a diddanwch yn ei wedd.

*What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do your friends despise, forsake  
you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield  
you; you will find a solace there.*

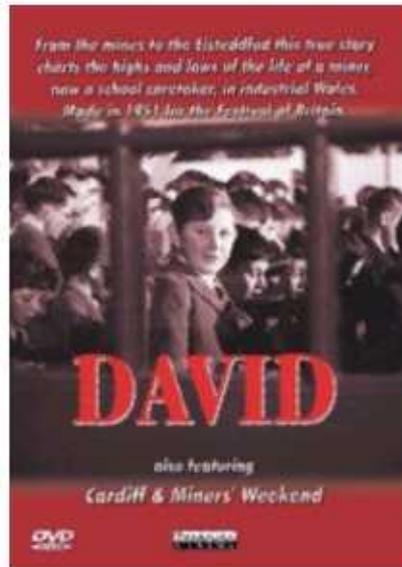
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVYddjDXXm4>

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## Blessing

Dear Lord,  
Make our journey to you this  
first Sunday of Lent  
one of grace, forgiveness and  
gentle love.  
May the Lord bless us,  
protect us from all evil  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
Amen.

## Closing video: Film David, final scene (Paul Dickson, 1951)



This is final scene from the film "David" where David Rees Griffiths comes back to Ammanford after coming close but not winning the 1932 National Eisteddfod prize. And there he returns to the school for his caretaking duties but he has a surprise in store courtesy of the young pupil who befriends him and narrates the film.

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-david-1951-online>  
(from 33:24 to the end)

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Readers:

**David Rees Griffiths, Amanwy  
The Old Valley**  
Mark Salmon

**David Rees Griffiths, Amanwy  
Diary**  
From Betws to Loughor to see Evan  
Roberts preach, 1904  
Glyn Pritchard

**A talk by John Jones on  
William Nantlais Williams**  
John Jones

**Acts 2: 38-42**  
David Evans

**William Nantlais Williams  
Diary – The moment of Nantlais's  
"conversion" as Joseph Jenkins  
visits Bethel, Ammanford, 1904,  
Excerpt I**  
Sir Simon Hughes

**Luc 19: 1-10**  
Megan Evans

**Seth Joshua  
Diary – Seth Joshua visits  
Nantlais's chapel Bethany,  
Ammanford, 1904 (excerpt)**  
Joshua Games

**William Nantlais Williams  
Yr Efen Ddiatalfa**  
from "Murmuron Newydd"  
Catrin Treharne

**William Nantlais Williams  
Diary – The moment of Nantlais's  
"conversion" as Joseph Jenkins  
visits Bethel, Ammanford, 1904,  
Excerpt II**  
Stephen Nantlais Williams

**John 20: 24-31**  
Rowenna Hughes

**A talk by Stephen N Williams,  
Honorary Professor of Theology  
at Queen's University, Belfast**  
Stephen Nantlais Williams

**Blessing and links**  
Neil Evans

**Producer Mike Williams**

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