

R. S. Thomas

'Evans'

A HELP-SHEET FOR TEACHERS



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BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET / CONTEXTS

(Please note that “context” is not an assessed element of this component of the WJEC GCSE in English Literature.)

Ronald Stuart Thomas was born in Cardiff in March 1913, though he was brought up in Holyhead; his father, who had been a merchant seaman during the Great War, worked on the ferries between Holyhead and Dublin. Thomas won a scholarship to the University College of North Wales in Bangor, where he studied Classics, graduating in 1935. After a year at St Michael’s Theological College, Llandaff, Cardiff, he was appointed to be curate at Chirk (1936–40), where he met the painter Mildred Elsie Eldridge, then teaching art at a nearby school.¹ They were married in 1940 and moved to Tallarn Green, near Wrexham, where R. S. Thomas became curate.

It was at this point that he looked west, towards Wales:

And from there, in the evening I could see the Welsh mountains some fifteen miles away, magical and mysterious as ever. I realized what I had done. My place was not here on this plain amongst these Welsh with English accents and attitudes. I set about learning Welsh so as to get back to the real Wales of my imagination.²

That last phrase is obviously a richly ambiguous one: Thomas very much creates his own romanticised vision of ‘Wales’: for him it is simple, rural, a place where people can live in close harmony with the natural world and, ultimately, with God. (In ‘The Moor’, published in the 1960s, he writes of walking in the Welsh countryside: ‘It was quiet. / What God was there made himself felt, / Not listened to, in clean colours’.³ Of industrial, and post-industrial, south Wales Thomas says very little and what he does say is negative.) Although he had been brought up as English-speaking, Thomas became a fervent Welsh nationalist. He saw the Welsh language as expressing a culture that was distinctive from that of England, which he consistently associated with the modern, materialist, industrial world which had no place for the spiritual and the imaginative life which Thomas valued.

(1) See Matthew Jarvis, ‘R. S. Thomas “A Marriage”’, *A Help-sheet for Teachers*, p. 4. swansea.ac.uk/crew/gcse-resources/gcse-resources-2020/r-s-thomas-a-marriage/ Through their long marriage and indeed after her death, Thomas wrote many poems to his wife. See R. S. Thomas, *Poems to Elsi*, ed. Damian Walford Davies (Bridgend: Seren, 2013).

(2) R.S. Thomas, *Autobiographies*, ed. Jason Walford Davies (London: Dent, 1997), pp. 1-16.

(3) ‘The Moor’ is in the *Library of Wales* anthology *Poetry 1900–2000* ed. Meic Stephens, pp. 145–46.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET / CONTEXTS

In 1942 Thomas had his wish to move west: he was appointed to be vicar at Manafon, a farming community near Newtown in mid-Wales. He had been writing poetry since his student days but it was mainly a poetry of rather sentimental rural descriptions and very old-fashioned in style. His poetry changed dramatically when he moved to Manafon, partly from his reading, encouraged by Elsi, of more Modernist poetry, but mainly the change arose from the situation he found himself in: the middle-class priest having to minister to a community of unsophisticated farmers and agricultural labourers, like Evans in the poem. His poetry shows him struggling to understand these people and his new environment.

In 1954 he was made vicar of Eglwysfach, near Aberystwyth. He was expecting it to be a more Welsh-speaking parish than Manafon but found that a significant portion of his parishioners were retired, middle-class English people, several of them retired military officers; relations between this group and their vicar, a Welsh pacifist, were not easy. These years were some of his most troubled, spiritually and imaginatively, and he looks back in a number of poems to his time at Manafon, to what now seemed the more authentic life of the Welsh hills. Some of these were nostalgic while others, like 'Evans', reflect his state of mind, arising from his difficulties as a vicar in Eglwysfach.

The main development in this period was a sharpening of his awareness of the political situation in Wales. This was the period of the founding of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Cymraeg (The Welsh Language Society) which began to fight for the revival of the Welsh language and it is the period of some of Thomas's most nationalist poems, including 'Reservoirs' (which alludes to the flooding of the Welsh-speaking village of Capel Celyn to create the reservoir at Trewern, to provide water for Liverpool).⁴ Thomas became active in campaigning on behalf of the Welsh language and his sometimes strident nationalism added to the tensions between Thomas and some of his parishioners at Eglwysfach.

In 1967 Thomas became Vicar at Aberdaron, at the far tip of the Llŷn Peninsula. The parish was mostly Welsh-speaking. Thomas continued to write and campaign on behalf of the Welsh language but he did so mainly in prose and in Welsh. From the volume *H'm* (1972) onwards, his poetry is mainly concerned with wider issues such as consumerism and militarism (he was active in the campaign against nuclear weapons) and all those influences in modern life which he saw as stifling the individual's imagination and spiritual existence. After his retirement from the Church in 1978, Thomas's poetry becomes even more focused on religious themes, but this is certainly not a poetry which tries to persuade the reader into belief in the Christian God. Indeed, the poetry of these later years is a frequent anguished struggle on his part to believe in God, a God who seems always to be elusive, usually seems to be absent, and may not exist at all. It is a poetry born out of R. S. Thomas's own struggle to understand God.

(4) 'Reservoirs' is in *Poetry 1900-2000* ed. Meic Stephens, p. 147.

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

Title.

'Evans' was published in R. S. Thomas's poetry collection *Poetry for Supper* (London: Hart-Davis, 1958). By then he had moved from his first parish, Manafon, to become the priest at Eglwysfach, near Aberystwyth. But the description of the location of Evans's home, his '**stark farm on the hill ridge**', suggests rather the hill farms of Thomas's former parish. In other words, the poem is essentially a recollection – we notice that the poem is in the past tense – of an episode that took place some years previously, in the hill country above Manafon. Thomas's biographer, Byron Rogers, notes that Thomas, as parish priest, recorded the death of 'William Evans' in the parish newsletter: '6 February [1947], the burial of William Evans aged 49 years. Mr. Evans had had a long and trying time in bed after his fatal accident'.⁵ Here the parson gives the bare facts; in the poem, years later, we get not only a more emotionally-detailed account of 'Evans' but also a sense of the poet-priest's own deep feelings.

Though it is not said in the poem, we assume that the poet is visiting Evans, who is evidently confined to his bed, in the role of parish priest, visiting one of his parishioners. This was a role which Thomas fulfilled of course in all his parishes, providing not only company but sometimes bringing food and, for those nearing death, spiritual comfort, including on occasion holy communion. In this situation it might seem rather blunt even cold to refer to the man as simply 'Evans' (rather than the more courteous 'Mr. Evans' or by using his Christian name). In fact, though, the poet's use of the surname almost certainly indicates informality. It is likely that this is how the priest knew him and indeed since this is likely to be how the farmer was known in the small rural community. The use of this common Welsh surname also assists the poet in making him a representative figure rather than writing a more specific, biographical poem about 'William Evans'.

(5) Byron Rogers, *The Man Who Went into the West: The Life of R. S. Thomas* (London: Aurum, 2006), p. 154.

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

Form.

The poem is written in two stanzas, the first of nine lines and the second of seven. Though it is not a sonnet (an eight-line 'octave' followed by a six-line 'sestet'), there is a 'turn' akin to that which occurs between the two parts of a sonnet, a shift of thought or perspective. There is, however, nothing of the intricate rhyme scheme that characterises the sonnet form. In 'Evans' not only are the lines unrhymed but only the final line of each stanza ends with a full stop, adding to the demarcation of the two elements of the poem. (After the opening question, '**Evans?**', the first stanza is syntactically one sentence.) The fact of the lines not ending with a full stop or even the pause of a comma gives a sense of the flow of the poet's thoughts as he recalls Evans. The slight pause as we move our eye from the end of one line to the beginning of the next can also cause emphasis to fall on the initial word of the next line: for example, '**Whine**', '**Dark**', '**Weather-tortured**' and, importantly in my reading of the poem, '**I**' in the penultimate line of the poem. There is a further full stop midway through the second stanza (line 13). The effect of the pause is to give further emphasis to '**Weather-tortured**' but it is also the point at which the focus of the poet's recollection moves from the external scene to the inner world of the poet's thoughts and feelings.

Lines 1-6.

The poem opens, strikingly, with a question: '**Evans?**' It might seem as if we join the poem in the midst of a conversation: someone has just asked the poet about Evans and the question gives rise to the recollections that follows; the poem is essentially a dramatic monologue. Alternatively, the thought of Evans may have arisen for some reason in the poet's mind and, again, the memory follows. If we accept the second reading – and given the personal nature of the thoughts in the second stanza, one might favour this reading – then the poem is an *internal* monologue. Either way, we are overhearing the poet's thinking, the movement of his mind as he recalls the scene and the anguish it caused him.

The linguistic register in these lines – and indeed throughout the poem as a whole – is simple, direct and frequently monosyllabic. The plainness of the language is enhanced by the nature of the hard consonants employed: '**bare**', '**gaunt**', '**black**'. The language seems entirely appropriate to, and evocative of, the interior of Evans's bare kitchen. A more elaborate multisyllabic register, a more formal or lyrical 'literary' language, would be less suitable. The description of Evans's home, the '**bare flight of stairs**', the '**gaunt**' kitchen, tells us of the lack of any form of luxury or even comfort in Evans's life. He is a hill farmer, an occupation which does not make him much money. One rather assumes that the floor, like the stairs, lacks a carpet and is composed of flagstones. '**Gaunt**' is more usually an adjective applied to someone's features or bodily physique than to a room. Indeed, the meanings which the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives are: 'slim, not fat'; 'abnormally lean, as from hunger' and even 'haggard-looking', though also figuratively, 'grim or desolate'. That final figurative usage would fit here and gives us, again, a vivid sense of the lack of comfort in the kitchen, which ought to be a place of warmth and homeliness. But the adjectives also perhaps suggest the bed-ridden figure whom the narrator has just left upstairs.

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

The poem in fact gives us no details as to what is actually wrong with Evans: is he ill or just very old? We know, from *outside* the poem, from the entry in the parish newsletter, written by Thomas and mentioned by Byron Rogers (above), that a William Evans, a farmer in the parish of Manafon, died not of old age, but of an accident, in middle age. But the poem does not refer to the details of William Evans's tragedy. It is important to remember here, as Matthew Jarvis rightly notes in his help-sheet on R. S. Thomas's 'A Marriage', that 'a poem is never a straightforward drawing from life'.⁶ The scene might have been inspired by an actual person, Thomas's memory of the real William Evans providing the germ of the poem, but 'Evans' in the poem is Thomas's literary (re-)construction. By not including specific details about what ails Evans, the situation is generalised. He comes in a way to stand for any number of pastoral visits to the sick and the elderly that R. S. Thomas made and, in the second stanza, his feelings about his capacity to deal with such situations.

Evans' isolation and vulnerability also indicate another way in which he is representative. Thomas was acutely aware of the pressures which the hill farmers were under. Not only were they subject to the hardness of the climate up on the hillside but the soil was poor for the growing of crops (mostly root crops) and the pasture often thin for the rearing of sheep. The farmers were, therefore, economically vulnerable. Evans's simple, '**gaunt**' house is thus fairly typical. As Thomas was aware, the hill farmers frequently went bankrupt and with them went a whole way of life, frequently Welsh-speaking, which Thomas valued for its authenticity and closeness to nature. He records the passing of this way of life in a number of his poems, for example 'The Welsh Hill Country' and the last stanza of 'Those Others'.⁷

The silence of the kitchen into which the narrator steps is emphasised by the few sounds that *are* to be heard: the song of the crickets and the '**black kettle's whine**'. The crickets have come in from the fields outside, presumably seeking warmth; Evans's life is lived close to the natural world. We presume that Thomas had in fact heard crickets in the hillside farmhouses. In rural communities, certainly into the twentieth century, crickets were traditionally considered to bring good luck and were therefore associated with happiness. (Charles Dickens published a short novel entitled *The Cricket on the Hearth* in 1845 in which a character exclaims that 'to have a cricket on the hearth is the luckiest thing in the world!') Whether Thomas was aware of this superstition we cannot know. But if one is aware of it, a degree of irony is set up, given Evans's plight. Indeed, the sound of the cricket '**singing**' in the bare kitchen becomes a rather plaintive one. Relatedly, in other contexts we might imagine the sound of the kettle singing on the fire as one giving a sense of security and comfort, but in Evans's kitchen the kettle is not singing but '**whining**', suggestive of discomfort, unhappiness. And again, we think of the figure up in his bed, alone.

(6) Matthew Jarvis, 'R. S. Thomas "A Marriage"', *A Help-sheet for Teachers*, p. 4.

(7) 'The Welsh Hill Country' and 'Those Others' are in Poetry 1900–2000 ed. Meic Stephens, pp. 138, 143–4.'

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

Lines 7-9.

Outside the hillside farm, of course, up **'on the hill ridge'**, there are no street-lights. The darkness which the poet steps out into is almost total. Its presence is in fact emphasised by its being described by the speaker as having a tactile quality; it is so intense that it feels enough to **'smother'** him. The dark seems sufficiently powerful to threaten to suffocate him, almost totally to snuff him out. In fact, **'smother'** suggests to the poet another image of the stifling of one's breathing and thus of one's life, that of drowning, as the darkness is again *felt* rather than seen as a **'thick tide / Of night'**. The image of the darkness as a **'tide'** introduces an association between the darkness and an all-engulfing sea that is picked up in the second stanza, where the darkness is **'filling'** the poet's eyes and mouth. The **'dark'** is seen as a **'tide...Silting'** up the veins of Evans and he is finally left **'stranded'** on a **'lonely shore'**. The imagery of the sea recurs in Thomas's poetry, even when, as in 'Evans', the setting is far inland. See, for instance, the closing stanza of 'Those Others'.⁸ Thomas was of course brought up close to the sea on Anglesey and he admired the maritime life of his father. Here in the first stanza the house seems under siege, like Evans himself, by natural forces which threaten to sweep it away and to reduce it to nothingness.

Lines 10-13.

At the outset of the second stanza the poet's attention shifts from Evans to his own inner thoughts and feelings. Again, the darkness on the hillside outside the farmhouse is seen by the poet as being so dense as to be, as we have noted, a physical presence. The word **'appalled'** might seem to be an unusually strong word to use (though the syntax causes us to anticipate what it is that *actually* appalls him if it is **'not the dark'**). There is something of a linguistic play here: **'appalled'** in everyday use, of course, has the meaning of 'horrified' or 'deeply dismayed'. But the poet has chosen his word carefully for the original meaning of **'appalled'** is 'to be made pale' (cf. 'pallor'). The poet, surely, is suggesting that, in the face of the overwhelming darkness, and the sense of nothingness and disorientation which it suggests, the experience has, paradoxically, made him pale.

(8) *Poetry 1900-2000*, ed. Meic Stephens, p.144.

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

The next image, **'the drip / Of rain like blood from the one tree / Weather-tortured'**, is in many ways key to the poem's full meaning. We assume that the immediate reference is to an actual tree, solitary out on the rain swept hillside. But the striking comparison of the rain dripping **'like blood'** opens new and important resonance. In the Christian tradition the Cross on which Christ was crucified is frequently associated metaphorically with a tree, an association, of course, with which R. S. Thomas would have been very familiar. The image has Biblical origins. In the First Epistle of Peter, for instance, the apostle refers to Christ bearing 'our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24). The image is used several times in The Acts of the Apostles; in Chapter 10, for instance, reference is made to Jesus 'whom they slew and hanged on a tree' (Acts 10:39), while in Chapter 13 we are told that, after the Crucifixion, Jesus's followers 'took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre' (Acts 13:29). The reference to the tree on the Welsh hillside being **'Weather-tortured'** thus transfers to (and reminds the reader of) Christ's torture on the Cross.

Theologically, the idea of the Cross on which Christ was crucified as a tree links with the tree in the Garden of Eden from which Eve picks the apple and brings about the Fall; the death of Christ, the 'second Adam', on the tree/cross redeems the fall of humankind.⁹ Christ's death is a sign of God's redeeming love. Eve disobeys God's injunction not to eat apples from the tree and Adam chooses to collude with her action. They thus cut themselves off from God and condemn humanity to a world of sin and mortality. God shows His loving willingness to forgive humanity by having his son suffer on the Cross, to pay the penalty for the actions of Adam and Eve and thus to redeem humanity. All the human individual must do in order to share in this redemption is to have faith in God and his Son. (The blood falling from the tree at the Crucifixion hints at the wine of the communion, another sign of redemption.)

Lines 13-16.

Again, the poet employs the imagery of the profound darkness outside the farmhouse to describe the plight of Evans, left alone in his bed: once more the dark is seen as so intense as to be physical, tactile. Associated with the smothering **'thick tide'** seen in the first stanza, the darkness now has connotations of death, **'silting'** up Evans's veins, clogging the flow of his life blood as he lies as if cast up on an empty shore. We notice the word **'vast'**; Evans is seen as alone, helpless, in a seemingly empty, Godless universe in which he appears to have little significance. The darkness suggests a universe which is devoid of meaning or values.

(9) The connection between the Cross/tree and the tree in the Garden of Eden is also made in a hymn with which Thomas would have been familiar, 'Sing, my tongue' (Hymn 95 in the English Hymnal, 1933): 'God in pity saw man fallen, / Shamed and sunk in misery, / When he fell on death by tasting / fruit of the forbidden tree; / Then another tree was chosen / Which the world from death should free'. The hymn is a translation of a sixth-century hymn, 'Pange lingua'.

LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTS ON THE POEM

It is the realisation of this situation which had '**appalled**' Thomas. (Again, we note the use of the past tense. The whole episode is a memory, one which, it seems, has stayed in the mind of the poet-priest.) The strength of the verb underlines the depth of Thomas's realisation that he has not succeeded in bringing to Evans the spiritual comfort which it was his role, as priest, to bring: the comfort born of the Christian message, that Christ died on the Cross to redeem humanity, including Evans, the message of God's love and of the possibility, through faith, of eternal life. That 'I left **stranded**' suggest his sense of culpability; indeed there is a strong sense that Thomas the priest, in the deep, negating darkness on the Welsh hillside, is as '**alone**' as the man he has left in his '**bleak bed**'. The final image is of one helpless man thinking of the helplessness of another.

COMMENTS ON THE POEM AS A WHOLE

'Evans' is very much a poem which is the result of R. S. Thomas's work as a parish priest: to give emotional and often practical support to parishioners who were ill or elderly or simply had personal problems. That support would, of course, be based in the Christian faith which they shared as members of his congregation. But, as 'Evans' shows, Thomas did not always find this role easy. He was by temperament a somewhat reserved man, who did not find it easy to socialise with people he did not know. (In later years, his refusal to be easily accessible to reporters and others in the media earned him the reputation of being 'the ogre of Wales', though there are many accounts of personal kindness to those he knew, including his parishioners.⁹)

'Evans' arises out of his memory of a parishioner at Manafon, in rural mid-Wales, the first parish for which Thomas had responsibility as priest, as opposed to being a curate, an assistant to the priest, as he had been in his previous two parishes. The parish, an agricultural community of small farms, presented him with particular challenges. He was a young priest in his late twenties with limited experience and, as a middle-class university graduate in Classics with one year at theological college, he was quite unprepared for the hard-working, physical way of life with which he was confronted. Years later he still vividly remembered the 'shock' of arriving in the parish:

I came out of a kind of bourgeois environment which, especially in modern times is protected; it's cushioned from some of the harsher realities; and this muck and blood and hardness, the rain and the spittle and the phlegm of farm life was of course, a shock to begin with.¹⁰

Thomas had nothing in common with the lives of the farmers and labourers on the small hillside farms, and yet he was expected to help them not just in their everyday lives but in particularly private times of stress and personal adversity, to give them emotional support and spiritual guidance. The vicar and his wife, of course, were looked up to in the community; the farmers and the agricultural workers and their families would, no doubt, not have felt that they could speak easily and casually to the vicar, though on occasions, as Thomas makes clear in *Y Llwybrau Gynt*, he and his wife were made welcome as guests for the occasional evening meal in the hillside farmhouses.¹¹

(9) See, for instance *Cofio RS: Cleniach yn Gymraeg?* [ed. Gareth Neigwl] (Caernarfon: Gwasg y Bwthyn, 2013), especially the essays by Mary Roberts and Ann Owen Vaughan. Even non-Welsh-speakers may find this profusely-illustrated book to be of interest.

(10) 'R. S. Thomas: Priest and Poet', *Poetry Wales*, Special R. S. Thomas issue, Spring 1972. This is the text of a BBC tv film by John Ormond.

(11) R. S. Thomas, *Selected Prose*, ed. Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Seren, 3rd 1995), p. 109–110.

COMMENTS ON THE POEM AS A WHOLE

Thomas's early poems came out of this situation: his trying to understand the rural people and to get to know them. In the most famous of these early poems, 'A Peasant', Thomas ultimately shows his admiration for Iago Prytherch, a rural labourer, for his resilience against all that the world throws against him.¹² But the difficulties of communication, on both sides, persisted: in 'They', the parishioners come to his back door (feeling that they do not have the social status to come to the front door of the vicarage), 'And are speechless'.¹³ They have a problem, but do not quite know how to go about talking about it with the vicar.

In 'Evans' Thomas looks back, some years later, to his time at Manafon. The very fact that he does so is surely revealing. The pain of the episode still seems vivid. Presumably, once more, Thomas was unable to establish the kind of intimate communication with Evans that would allow Thomas to bring him true comfort. This, as the last part of the poem suggests, was not simply a matter of the sort of comfort brought about by social conversation but the more profound comfort and reassurance that Evans would have received had the poet-priest been able to convey to him the reality of the Christian message of hope, of the reality of a life hereafter for every individual if they have faith in God's love. We notice that Thomas has walked down from Evans's bedroom '**many times**'; the memory is not of one visit but of many.

The structure of the poem helps convey its theme. The first of the poem's three sentences constitutes the whole of the first stanza, describing in an appropriately simple register Evans's bleak farmhouse on the hillside. The second sentence is composed of two elements both of which, the poet tells us are *not* that which caused him to be '**appalled**'; '**It was not the dark...**' and it was '**not even the drip of rain...**'. The rhetorical structure here raises our expectation. What then was it that so affected him? And then, in the final sentence, comes the poem's climax: what appalled him was not simply the image of Evans, alone as the darkness of death slowly claims him, but the poet's awareness of his own incapacity as priest. And given that the poem is a memory of an episode that took place in the past (we cannot tell how long ago, of course, but the fact that it is a recollection is clear from the first line onwards) we may want to consider what it tells us about the poet's state of mind in the present. Why is he recollecting Evans? It seems, still a priest but now at Egwylsfach, he is still reflecting on his own sense of inadequacy. The poem is entitled 'Evans' but ultimately, it seems, the poem is about the poet and his own wrestling with his capabilities as parish priest.

(12) *Poetry 1900-2000*, ed. Meic Stephens, pp. 137-38.

(13) 'They' is in R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poem 1945-1990* (London: Dent, 1993), p. 203.

FOUR QUESTIONS STUDENTS MIGHT ASK ABOUT THE POEM

- In what ways does the visit of Thomas the priest suggest the dire circumstances which Evans is in?
- Why does the poet seem so unhappy in the second stanza?
- What connections exist between the imagery of the poem and its themes?
- What is the effect of the poem having no rhymes or even having line endings that stop?

PHOTOGRAPHS

Some striking photographs of R. S. Thomas were taken in his later years by the photographer Howard Barlow. Most of these were taken at the cottage at Sarn Y Plas, Rhiw, at the far tip of the Llŷn Peninsula in north Wales, where he lived in retirement with Elsi Eldridge. (The cottage is owned by the National Trust and there are plans to open it to the public.)

howardbarlow.photoshelter.com/index/G0000jE6mmQLzIgs

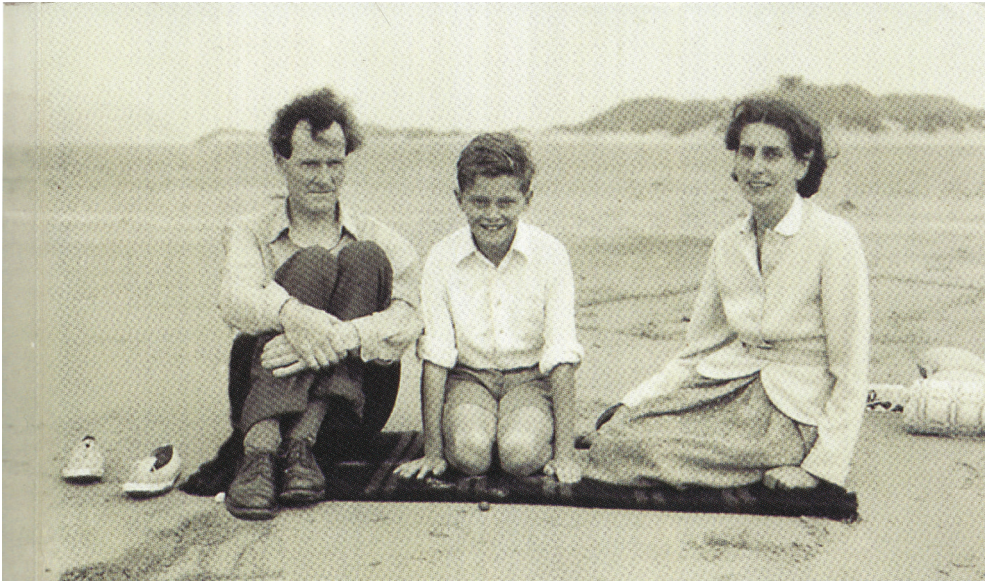


1 R. S. Thomas and Elsi on their wedding day (July 1940, Bala).



2 A drawing of Thomas by Elsi Eldridge (1940s).

PHOTOGRAPHS



3 R. S. Thomas on a family outing with Elsi and their son, Gwydion (1960s).



4 R. S. Thomas at Eglwysfach (1966).

Photographs 1-3 are © Elodie Thomas and by permission of the R. S. Thomas Research Centre, Bangor University.
 Photograph 4 is © John Hedgecoe.

LINKS TO USEFUL WEB RESOURCES

An essay on R. S. Thomas's life and work is provided by an American organisation called the Poetry Foundation and is a useful complement to this help-sheet. At the end of the essay you will find links to: (a) a selection of R. S. Thomas poems that are available on-line, and (b) a useful bibliography:

poetryfoundation.org/poets/r-s-thomas

A very informed account of Thomas's life and career by Prof. M. Wynn Thomas is to be found on the site of the 'Dictionary of Welsh Biography': **biography.wales/article/s12-THOM-STU-1913**

A short extract from the television programme *Bookmark*, broadcast in 1995, is available on YouTube, filmed when Thomas was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature (which he did not win).

youtube.com/watch?v=H8v-uc-DI7g&t=3s

A video talk entitled 'Art's Storehouse: The Creative World of R. S. Thomas and Elsie Eldridge' by Jason Walford Davies and Tony Brown, illustrated by numerous pictures and manuscripts from the Archive of the R. S. Thomas Research Centre at Bangor University, is to be found here:

youtube.com/watch?v=fv1Q4Y625fE&t=1301s

A 45-minute radio programme on Thomas by the Welsh author Jon Gower, who knew Thomas well, focuses on Thomas's lifelong enthusiasm for birdwatching and the impact this had on his poetry:

bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b01r5n6g

Some scholarly essays on Thomas and a very substantial bibliography are available on the website of the R. S. Thomas Research Centre at Bangor University:

Bibliography: **rsthomas.bangor.ac.uk/bibl.php.en**

Essays: **rsthomas.bangor.ac.uk/research.php.en**

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Tony Brown, *R. S. Thomas*, Writers of Wales series (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, new ed. 2013). Expands on some points in the present help-sheet.

Byron Rogers, *The Man Who Went to the West: The Life of R. S. Thomas* (London: Aurum, 2006).

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J. P. Ward, *The Poetry of R. S. Thomas* (Bridgend: Seren, new ed., 2001).

All books are available in paperback editions.

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