

# New headstone to mark victim of last fatal duel

A NEW headstone will be erected at Llandyfriog Church on Saturday to preserve the memory of Thomas Heslop – the victim of the last fatal duel fought in Wales on 10 September, 1814.

The chest-tomb of the West Indian who was killed in a duel against John Beynon, can be found in the church grounds, but the writing on the headstone has been eroded by the weather and a new one is needed.

As well as the unveiling of the new headstone, a dedication of plaque to commemorate the Last Duel in Wales has also been made and is erected at the entrance gates with bilingual information and a map, organised by Ken Jones, of Llandyfriog.

The cost of both headstone and plaque has been paid for by Endurance Wind Power of Birmingham.

Another Ken Jones, the Newcastle Emlyn historian, has published a book on the event. "The reason we are doing this, is to place a new stone on Heslop's grave as the old one is so weather-worn as being virtually unreadable and to preserve the memory of Thomas Heslop for perhaps another 200 years," he said.

"We were told one version of the tale at school, but there is another

by Cambrian News reporter  
edit@cambrian-news.co.uk

one that hails from the official notes of that time.

"What we do know is that Thomas Heslop, a gentleman of the West Indies, came to stay in the town for the purpose of partridge shooting and was invited by local solicitor John Beynon to go on a shoot."

A well-to-do gentleman, Heslop, who is referred to in the Burial Register as 'Esquire', was aggravated by not being allowed to shoot where he wanted. With wine flowing freely later that night he challenged Beynon to a duel.

Ken added: "The duel took place two days later at Danwarin fields but the actual happenings from then on aren't clear.

"Some say Heslop was fatally wounded by Beynon with one bullet through his back but the 'official' version says that the bullet had penetrated his right side, gone through to his left side and was found loose inside his flannel waistcoat."

A charge of murder was reduced to manslaughter and John Beynon was found guilty and fined one shilling.



Historian Ken Jones at the information plaque showing the position of the grave of West Indian Thomas Heslop at Llandyfriog Church, the victim of the last fatal duel to be fought in Wales

"According to the old story the people of the town were so incensed that Beynon had to hide in the cellar of a house in Bridge Street before fleeing to America," added Ken. "We now know that to be untrue as he was made clerk to the Cardiganshire Courts in October 1814."