FOREWORD

Professor Ronald D. Dennis has been successful in two major careers in one lifetime. He was an outstanding instructor of Spanish and Portuguese, focusing on teaching and writing about the Portuguese language. This publication of the 1850 *Udgorn Seion* (Zion’s Trumpet) is a fruit of his ongoing second career as the leading specialist in Welsh Mormon history. We have respected Ron ever since Carma’s father, dean of fine arts Gerrit de Jong, said that Ron was one of his best Portuguese students, displaying remarkable linguistic ability. Young Dennis put his outstanding talent to use while serving an LDS mission to Brazil and Uruguay, followed by earning a PhD in Portuguese and Brazilian history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He then spent decades as a heavily involved faculty member, adding administrative assignments to teaching undergraduate and graduate classes and also generating papers, articles, and books in his field. This profession culminated in his call to serve as president of the Brazil Fortaleza Mission in the late 1990s.

As early Mormon historians, we have long known and enjoyed Ronald Dennis as a fellow faculty member at Brigham Young University. Ron is the best source of knowledge concerning the amazing story of the conversion of perhaps ten thousand Welsh Mormons in the middle of the nineteenth century and the lasting historical impact of the massive migration of half of them to west-
ern America. As an impressive byproduct of his research in Welsh Mormon history, Dennis has electronically published hundreds of personal histories accessible at welshmormonhistory.org.

The epic story of the early Welsh Mormons was virtually unknown, even to Professor Dennis, until he personally mastered nineteenth-century Welsh—a major challenge even for a linguist with an operative knowledge of the major tongues of western Europe and the Americas. Since writing impressive books on Welsh immigration and literature, he has focused for a dozen years on producing “facsimile translations,” or reproductions of early Welsh missionary texts and volumes of official Welsh Mormon periodicals produced during the great harvest of converts from that land. Virtually alone, Ron continues to work to preserve the full story of how the early preaching of the restored gospel inspired both fiery debate and heroic sacrifice among the people of Wales. This volume is another important disclosure in this saga, part of Dennis’s continuing efforts to translate all early Welsh Mormon literature.

Joseph Smith himself called riverboat captain Dan Jones on a mission to Wales with instructions to “buy a press, and do business aright.”¹ Jones was with the Prophet in his last days at Carthage and rode through the dangerous crowd with a message on the morning of the Martyrdom. The feisty captain would serve two long-term missions to his homeland, spending a total of eight years there. Motivated by Joseph Smith’s inspired encouragement to use the power of the press, Jones produced almost fifty missionary tracts, which explained Mormonism and responded to its assailants, and founded Zion’s Trumpet by the time he terminated his first Welsh mission in 1849. Jones then turned the periodical’s editorship over to his convert-understudy, John S. Davis, whose twelve 1850 issues are printed in this present volume. Tender-hearted but zealous, Davis nearly matched Jones in the number of missionary tracts he produced, and he also served as a counselor in the presidency of the Church in Wales. Consequently, Davis edited Zion’s Trumpet with a leader’s perspective on this 1850 community of over four thousand members, recording their faith amidst serious conflict, their hopes and plans to gather to Zion, and their emotions on leaving families and
Each title page of Zion’s Trumpet was headed by the Old Testament call for God’s people of the latter days: “Come out of her (namely Babylon) my people” (see Revelation 18:4). We compose this foreword in our mature years, grateful for the sacrifices of our own pioneer grandparents who answered this call from all parts of the United States as well as England, Scotland, and Sweden. One opens this “facsimile translation” to see the life and beliefs of early Welsh Mormons, an actual recreation that is more fine-tuned than the often abstract generalizations of a survey history. These monthly issues are filled with letters from those in Zion and on the way to Zion, fresh experiences of those who survived the sea journey, suffered sickness as they passed through New Orleans and St. Louis, and gathered strength in Council Bluffs before embarking again upon the rolling plains. Zion’s Trumpet contains members’ letters filled with testimony, sometimes including healings in simple, reverent words. Readers today will encounter experiences of mind and spirit as powerful as those of the New Testament.

These writings are also a gateway to early Mormon meetings through their conference reports, which summarize preaching from general and regional gatherings. Two official minutes of British conferences are in this volume, with statistics reflecting the fire of hundreds of individual conversions. Original editor Davis added vigorous doctrinal explanations that gave substance to conversion and holding fast to the restored faith. Love and light and the logical, scriptural gospel are captured in verse and comment. This volume contains religious history in its rich flavors, well served with the insightful comments of modern editor Dennis.

The December 1850 issue closes with four printed pages from the sea journal of Welsh emigrant David Rees Evans, which is as informative on early Mormon immigration as an entire book on the subject. Evans traveled with a mixed company of Welsh and English Saints who left Liverpool on October 17, 1850, and arrived at New Orleans only five weeks later. With subliminal pride David concluded, “We do not choose to praise our own faithfulness,” but adds that no company traveled safer or fast-
er. This is one of the longer pieces contained in this volume of Zion’s Trumpet, but it illustrates the powerful faith displayed on land and sea by these Saints of 1850.

Nearly two centuries later, we are honored to follow these pioneer Mormons in a firm conviction that the restored gospel is true and worth sacrificing for. We are also honored to express publicly our admiration and indebtedness to Ronald D. Dennis for decades of personal friendship and for his incredibly skillful persistence in reopening the sealed books of the Welsh Latter-day Saints, which are coded in a difficult ancient tongue, heavily sprinkled with Welsh vocabulary of an earlier era. The stories of these converts become at once fascinating to the modern reader in their differences yet familiar because of the converts’ shared beliefs. But for the timing of the gathering, dedicated Latter-day Saints today will find that the discourses and doctrines in Zion’s Trumpet still ring true.

Carma de Jong Anderson
Richard Lloyd Anderson

Note
1. Dan Jones to Thomas Bullock, January 20, 1855.
By the time he began this second volume of the Welsh Mormon periodical *Udgorn Seion*, John S. Davis was something of a veteran in the publishing world. After finishing his printing apprenticeship, Davis gained experience in typesetting and proofreading with various jobs. And the job that would change his life forever was the one he obtained with the Reverend John Jones in the little village of Rhydybont in Carmarthenshire. It was not the reverend, however, who would answer Davis’s questions about religion—it was the reverend’s younger brother Dan.

Dan Jones had spent most of 1845 in North Wales as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But to complete the assignment he received from Brigham Young to translate and publish the “Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles,” Jones traveled to his brother’s home in Rhydybont toward the latter part of that year.

On 3 December 1845 he wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which he proudly announced that he was sending him the Welsh translation of the proclamation. Jones declared, “Tis but a few minutes since I finished printing 4000, with my own hand, on a borrowed Press.” The borrowed press was that of his older brother John. And for his act of kindness in allowing Dan to print Mormon materials, Reverend Jones’s press came to be known in Wales as the “prostitute press.”
The typesetting for the twelve-page proclamation was very likely performed by twenty-three-year-old John S. Davis. The message of the pamphlet was “to all the kings of the earth, to the president and to the governors of the United States of America, and to the rulers and all the people of the world.”

Although Davis did not bear any of these lofty titles, his conversion to Mormonism the following April had an enormous impact on the spread of his new religion in Wales. During the next three years he would be involved in the publication of a dozen more pamphlets, a small hymnal, a 102-page history of the LDS Church, a 288-page book with scriptural explanations in defense of Mormonism, and thirty issues (580 pages) of Prophwyd y Jubili (Prophet of the Jubilee), a monthly periodical that energetically proclaimed the message of the restored gospel—all authored by Davis’s mentor, Dan Jones.

When Jones left Wales in early 1849, the logical—and perhaps the only—choice to replace him as editor of the periodical and as the one responsible for all Church printing in Wales was his protégée John S. Davis. During the next five years Davis would produce not only 129 issues of Udgorn Seion but also two hymnals, numerous pamphlets and poems, and the Welsh translations of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

Even if Davis had been able to use today’s technology in his work of publishing more than four thousand pages in five years, it would still constitute a remarkable accomplishment. But he did his work one small piece of type at a time after painstakingly writing everything out in longhand. There is no evidence that he had an unusual gift of oratory, nor did he traverse Wales speaking to the masses in public squares. His publications, however, played a unique and irreplaceable role in the conversion of many hundreds of his compatriots.

Like the first volume of Udgorn Seion, this second volume continued to appear monthly with a four-page printed wrapper. The size, however, increased by eight pages per issue, and the price per
issue was an additional halfpenny. The contents are quite similar in nature to those of the first volume. All issues were printed on Davis’s own press in the small miner’s cottage where he lived on Nantygwenith Street in the Georgetown area of Merthyr Tydfil.

This 1850 volume of *Udgorn Seion* is published in a “facsimile translation” format to provide the reader with something of the appearance and flavor of the original Welsh publication, so carefully and lovingly produced under the guiding hand and expertise of John S. Davis, whom Dan Jones labeled “a faithful man” and a “master Welsh printer.”

Ronald D. Dennis

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**Notes**

1. Dan Jones to Brigham Young, December 3, 1845, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
