

BEVAN, BRIDGET ('Madam Bevan '; 1698 - 1779), philanthropist and educationist

Name: Bridget Bevan
Pseudonym: Madam Bevan
Date of birth: 1698
Date of death: 1779
Spouse: Arthur Bevan
Parent: Elizabeth Vaughan (née Thomas)
Parent: John Vaughan
Gender: Female
Occupation: philanthropist and educationist
Area of activity: Education; Philanthropy
Author: Mary Clement

The youngest daughter of [John](#) and Elizabeth Vaughan, Derllys Court, Carmarthenshire. She was christened 30 October 1698 at Merthyr church by Thomas Thomas, the rector. Noted as patron of the Welsh circulating schools, she must have known [Griffith Jones](#), Llanddowror, from girlhood, as her father was organizer of S.P.C.K. schools in Carmarthenshire from 1700 to 1722 and [Griffith Jones](#) was in charge of schools at Laugharne (1709) and Llanddowror (1716). Moreover, [Griffith Jones](#) became connected by marriage with the Vaughan family, he and [Richard Vaughan](#), Bridget's uncle (died 1729), marrying two sisters, Margaret and Arabella Philipps of [Picton Castle](#), Pembrokeshire

On 30 December 1721 Bridget married ARTHUR BEVAN, barrister-at-law, Laugharne. Bevan became recorder of Carmarthen borough, 1722-41, and a Member of Parliament, 1727-41. In May 1735 he was appointed Judge of Equity in South and North Wales. He was the executor of the will of Sir Richard Steele. He died 6 March 1743, aged 56, and was buried at Laugharne church. (The date of his death is given by most writers as 1745.)

Derllys Court in Bridget Bevan's early days was a centre of religious and educational life. Her rector in 1700 wrote a letter to the S.P.C.K., advocating the erection of a charity school in every parish in Great Britain. It was natural, therefore, for her to be interested in the work of her father and pastor, and she founded at least two schools of her own at Llandilo Abercowin and Llandebie. She exercised great influence on [Griffith Jones](#), and when he began his Welsh circulating schools, sometime between 1731 and 1737, she became his chief patron and adviser. Between 1732 and 1738 he wrote 175 letters to her, 94 of which have been published. Sometime after the death of his wife in 1755, [Griffith Jones](#) went to live at Mrs. Bevan's home at Laugharne, where he died 8 April 1761, bequeathing to her the funds of the schools and his private fortune, totalling £7,000, with instructions to carry on the circulating schools. This she did very successfully until her death in 1779; indeed, the year 1773 with its 242 schools and 13,205 pupils was the most flourishing in the history of the movement. She bequeathed £10,000 for the continuation of the schools, but her will was disputed by two of her relatives who were also trustees, lady Elizabeth Stepney of Llanelly and Admiral William Lloyd, Danyrallt, Llangadock. The whole fund was placed in Chancery, and remained there for a period of thirty years, having in the meantime accumulated to over £30,000. In 1804 the money was released and devoted to the educational purposes intended by Mrs. Bevan, but in 1854 the schools then set up were absorbed into the system of the National Society. The Welsh circulating school movement had come to an end.

Besides being a patron of the Welsh circulating schools, Madam Bevan was interested in most of the religious, philanthropic, and educational movements of her time. She died 11 December 1779 and was buried at Llanddowror church on 17 December

Author

Dr Mary Clement

Sources

S.P.C.K. Manuscripts (1761-79), London, containing abstracts of letters from Madam Bevan and her assistants

Manuscripts in the Library of the Carmarthenshire Museum

letters of Griffith Jones to Madam Bevan, 1723-8

Welch piety, or, A farther account of the circulating Welch charity schools &c; to which are annexed testimonials relating to the masters and scholars of the said schools; in a letter to a friend (1742-60) (1761-79) (the years 1777-8 and 1778-9 missing)

Edward Morgan (ed.), *Letters of the Rev. Griffith Jones, late Rector of Llandowror, Carmarthenshire, founder of the Welsh circulating schools to Mrs. Bevan, late of Laugharne, near Carmarthen with an introductory essay* (London 1832)

The life and times of Selina, countess of Huntingdon (London 1839)

Mary Curtis, *The antiquities of Laugharne and Pendine, Carmarthenshire, S. Wales, with some notice of their neighbourhoods, and illustrations* (London 1871)

C. Morgan-Richardson, *History of the institution once called "The Welsh Piety", but now known as Mrs. Bevan's Charity* (1890)

G. Eyre Evans, 'Arthur Bevan,' in *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, iii, 53

D. E. Jenkins, *Life of Thomas Charles* (Denbigh 1908)

D. Ambrose Jones, 'Madam Bevan' in *Yr Haul*, March 1931

W. Moses Williams, 'The Friends of Griffith Jones,' in *Y Cymmrodor*, 46, 1939

G. J. Thomas, 'The Chancery action re Madam Bevan's Will,' in *Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, 1939

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Correspondence and minutes of the S.P.C.K. relating to Wales 1699-1740 (University of Wales Press 1952)

Mary Clement *The S.P.C.K. and Wales, 1699-1740* (S.P.C.K. 1954)

T. Kelly, *Griffith Jones, Llandowror pioneer in adult education* (Cardiff 1950)

Further Reading

T. Morgan, *Enwogion Cymreig 1700-1900* (1907), p.21

Wikipedia Article: [Bridget Bevan](#)

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