

EDWARDS, HENRY THOMAS (1837 - 1884), dean of Bangor

Name: Henry Thomas Edwards
Date of birth: 1837
Date of death: 1884
Spouse: Anne Dora Edwards (née Jones)
Spouse: Mary Edwards (née Davis)
Parent: Louisa Edwards
Parent: William Edwards
Gender: Male
Occupation: dean of Bangor
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

An elder brother of [archbishop A. G. Edwards](#), was born at Llan-ym-Mawddwy, Meirionethshire, 6 September 1837. After an interrupted early education, he went to Oxford (first to Christ Church, then to Jesus), and graduated in 1861, but was precluded by ill health from attempting honours in the final schools. After a few months on the staff of Llandoverly College, he became (1861-6) curate to his father at Llangollen.

He was then preferred to the populous parish of Aberdare (1866-9), and was afterwards (1869-76) vicar of Llanbeblig, i.e. Caernarvon. There he was immediately plunged into controversy on religious instruction in the day schools, and he also fought against the movement for disestablishing the Welsh Church - he was concerned in this not only as a defender of the particular interests of that church but because he strongly believed in 'religious establishment' as a principle. But with these views, which brought him into conflict with Dissent, Edwards combined an ardent Welsh patriotism which was not always welcome to his fellow-Anglicans. A long letter by him, addressed in 1869 to Gladstone, and published in 1870 under the title *The Church of the Cymry*, attributed (not perhaps with absolute accuracy) the alienation of the Welsh people from Anglicanism to the treatment meted out by governments in the past to the Welsh language and to Welsh-speaking reformers in the Church. To the publication of this letter has been attributed the fact that thenceforth, so long as the Establishment lasted, the Crown saw to it that all its nominees to Welsh bishoprics should be Welsh-speaking.

Later, when dean of Bangor (from 1876), Edwards continued to champion 'Welshness' within the Church; that was the burden of his address at the Church congress at Swansea in 1879. He was very critical of the preparation given to Welsh ordinands, which seemed to him to pay insufficient attention to the cultivation of Welsh habits of thought and expression. He protested strongly (but vainly) against the 'opening' of specifically Welsh endowments at Jesus College, Oxford. In 1883 he co-operated zealously in the foundation of a university college for North Wales - his insistence that this college should be entirely 'secular' (and also non-resident) might seem to be contrary to his previously-expressed views on religion in the schools, but was not really so.

The Dean was cut down in his prime. Throughout his life his health had been most delicate; as a boy his 'nervous excitability' had attracted notice; he failed to stay his course at Oxford; he broke down at Aberdare; he was twice widowed after very brief marriages; he nearly died of typhoid fever in 1882. At last, incessant preaching and speaking and writing broke him; in 1884 he had a prolonged spell of insomnia, and on 24 May 1884 he died by his own hand, at Ruabon.

A selection of his addresses was published in 1889 under the title *Wales and the Welsh Church*, with a memoir by David Jones which has been the main source of the present notice.

Edwards was twice married: first in 1867 to Mary, daughter of [D. Davis](#) of Aberdare (for whom see [Davis family](#) of Hirwaun, Aberdare, and Ferndale) - she died in August 1871; and second in 1873 to Anne Dora Jones, of Treanna, Anglesey - she died at the end of 1875.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Jenkins, R. T., (1959). EDWARDS, HENRY THOMAS (1837 - 1884), dean of Bangor. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 14 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-EDWA-THO-1837>

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