

ELLIS, JOHN (died 1665), cleric and quasi-Puritan

Name: John Ellis
Date of death: 1665
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and quasi-Puritan
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Thomas Richards

Rector of Dolgelley from 1646 to 1665. Born, as his will states, at Gwylan, Maentwrog, Meirionnydd, he was educated at Oxford [at his matriculation he is described as 'of Llandecwyn '], becoming Fellow of Jesus College in 1628 and D.D. of S. Andrews in 1634. He was rector of Wheatfield (Oxfordshire) till he was nominated by the Commissioners for the Great Seal to the living of Dolgelley, at a time when the religious policy of Parliament was wielded by Puritan lords, the Committee for Plundered Ministers, and the Westminster Assembly, all of them orthodox, moderate, more or less Presbyterian in tendency, before extreme men came into power with Pride's Purge and the Second Civil War. The migration from Oxfordshire to his native Merioneth had one great advantage - the substantial emoluments of the new promotion, which included the natural revenue of the rectory ('nearly £100 a year,' it was reputed in 1648), together with a reserved rent of £40 per annum from the rectory of Towyn and £80 from the prebend of Vaynol allowed him as 'augmentations' by the Puritan authorities. Ellis was named one of the twenty-five 'approvers' under the Propagation Act of 1650; his name is occasionally found attesting certificates for the Protectorate Triers; he was prominent in advocating the institution of a college for the training of Puritan ministers, and was willing to act as lecturer in it till proper professors were found. Puritan of a sort he may have been, but even the advocacy of a college to curb the extravagances of illiteracy and extremism, his implied criticisms of some of the people allowed to preach by the Triers, and the eulogy pronounced upon him by the uncompromising Cavalier **Rowland Vaughan** of Caer-gai, go far to prove that he had very little sympathy with the later religious policy of the Puritans. He found no difficulty in conforming after the Restoration - no better proof need be found than the publication in 1660 of his *Defensio Fidei*, a Latin defence of the Anglican position and a commentary on the *Thirty-nine Articles* (a few years before, says **Rowland Vaughan**, he had presented him with an authoritative copy of an Anglican pamphlet defending the use of the Prayer Book). He died in 1665, having in his will placed a tenement in the parish of Llanaber (Barmouth) in the hands of his trustees for the yearly maintenance of an able and godly schoolmaster at Dolgelley to teach twelve children, boys, especially orphans, up to the age of 16; a provision which is usually taken to be the foundation of the Dolgelley grammar school.

Author

Thomas Richards, (1878 - 1962)

Sources

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Endowed Charities Report, Merioneth (1895), sub Dolgelly

information from Mr. John Lloyd, Llanbedr, Meirionnydd

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Ellis](#)

Additional Links

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