

EVANS, ALCWYN CARYNI (1828 - 1902), antiquary

Name: Alcwyn Caryni Evans
Date of birth: 1828
Date of death: 1902
Spouse: Mary Evans (née Thomas)
Spouse: Elizabeth Amelia Evans (née Morgan)
Child: Eleonora Imogen Evans
Child: Marian Sophia Evans
Parent: Sophia Evans
Parent: Evan Donard Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: antiquary
Area of activity: Education; History and Culture; Scholarship and Languages
Authors: Bertie George Charles, Morfudd Nia Jones

Born in Carmarthen on the 14th of May 1828, the second of the seven children of Evan Donard Evans (1796 - 1877), and his wife Sophia Evans (1800-1844). His father was a well-known schoolmaster who was educated at Taunton and Manchester College, York, he was popularly known as 'Evans of York'. He opened a private school at Pontantwn in the parish of Llangendeirne in 1822, but soon moved it to Carmarthen, first in Wood Street and after 1831 at the old Quaker meeting house, Lammas Street.

Alcwyn Evans gives no information about his education, but he was probably a pupil at his father's school. Like his father he became a schoolmaster, and for about forty years he kept a grammar school, 'The Carmarthen Academy' in Lammas Street, and after his father's death he moved to the old Quaker house. He was proficient in Latin and Greek, and was also familiar with other languages. It is said that he was a conscientious teacher that ruled his class with firm discipline, and demanded the best from his pupils. He was described as a physically strong and powerfully-built man with a partially withered arm, but it is clear from reports that he was capable of "wielding it in a swinging movement with menacing effect".

Alcwyn Evans was interested in local history from a young age, and collected a wealth of historical material on the town and county of Carmarthen. At the Carmarthen National Eisteddfod in 1867 he won the chief literary prize with his "History of Carmarthenshire". This history (NLWMS 12369-12371B) was possibly one of his most valuable possessions, and he continued adding details to it until his death.

As a methodical and painstaking compiler who had a compelling urge to seek and find, Alcwyn Evans did more than anyone to research and record the antiquities of Carmarthen town and county during the second half of the 19th century. In his early twenties he made transcripts of records from the original 'Book of Ordinances' of the borough of Carmarthen he records of which date from 1590-1756, and in 1878 he edited and annotated J. R. Daniel-Tyssen's *Royal Charters ... of the Town and County of Carmarthen*. He also edited and annotated the charter rolls of Carmarthen, and added contemporary data, as well as collecting facsimiles of the autographs of the mayors of Carmarthen from the year 1400 onwards. His collections on the 'Rebecca riots' were utilized by **H. Tobit Evans** in his book *Rebecca and her daughters* (Caerdydd, 1910).

He also delighted in compiling pedigrees, and mainly concentrated his studies on the genealogies of the ancient families of South Wales and the town and county of Carmarthen. In an article in the *Carmarthen Journal*, 11 August 1939 a certain 'E.J.W.' states 'that to the genealogist these books are of inestimable value, inasmuch as they bring the pedigrees of the Welsh gentry up to date.'

In Alcwyn Evans's obituary, the **Rev. M. H. Jones**, a Carmarthen antiquary, stated that "The elaborate, exhaustive and most beautifully written MS. books which he left behind him are marvels of skill and scholarship ... Mr Evans was undoubtedly one of the few authorities to consult on pedigrees, ancient wills, documents and other references to the past history of the county" (*Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society*, vol. 2, p.110). In 1906, Messrs W. Spurrell & Son, who had plans to publish his manuscripts describe them as containing "a great deal of original matter of historical and genealogical character, carefully compiled from various sources, together with transcripts and translations of rare old documents, fully annotated with the most laborious and painstaking care". (*Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society*, vol. 2, p.153).

Both Alcwyn Evans and his father were ardent Unitarians and in his later years, Alcwyn Evans became a strong Liberal Unionist. He was a member of the Cambrian Archaeological Association and of the Carmarthen Literary and Scientific Institution. For years he prepared the rate books for the town of Carmarthen.

He married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Amelia Rees (died 1867), daughter of John Morgan, and widow of an innkeeper who kept the Castle Inn in Priory Street, Carmarthen, and for several years they kept the Castle Inn, and later the Bird in Hand, John Street, Carmarthen. They had no children. He married his second wife Mary (1835-1884) in 1870, she was the daughter of William Thomas, a Llandovery ropemaker who was the nephew of **Thomas Charles** of Bala. They had two daughters, Marian Sophia (born 1872) and Eleonora Imogen (born 1874).

Alcwyn Evans died on the 11th March 1902 at his home in Carmarthen. His collections were dispersed after his death. His "beautifully written and carefully indexed volumes of manuscripts" passed into the library of **Sir Evan Davies Jones** of Pentower, Fishguard and in July 1939 were purchased at Sotheby's of London on behalf of Alderman R. J. R. Loxdale, Castle Hill, Llanilar, Cardiganshire, who presented them to the National Library of Wales (**NLW MSS 12356-88**).

Authors

Dr Bertie George Charles, (1908 - 2000)

Morfudd Nia Jones

Sources

The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Advertiser , 14 March 1902, 11 August 1939

South Wales Daily News, 12 March 1902

NLW Archives: **NLW MS 12359D**: Pedigrees for his family tree

Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club, Vol. 2, pp.110, 153-4

E. Vernon Jones, 'Alcwyn Caryni Evans 1828-1902', *The Carmarthenshire Historian*, 6 (1969), pp. 37-46

B. G. Charles, **'The Alcwyn Evans Manuscripts'**, *The National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 1, no. 2 Winter 1939

Further reading

People's Collection Wales: **Song book of Alcwyn C. Evans, 1846**

Gweithiau

NLW Archives: NLW MS 12361D: Index to pedigrees

NLW Archives: NLW MS 12359D: Pedigrees

NLW Archives: NLW MS 12360D: Pedigrees

Additional Links

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