

EVANS, JOHN (1651? - 1724), bishop of Bangor and later of Meath

Name: John Evans
Date of birth: 1651?
Date of death: 1724
Parent: Ynyr Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: bishop of Bangor and later of Meath
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

is said by **Browne Willis** (who wrote in 1721 during Evans's lifetime) to have been born at Plas Du, Llanarmon, Caernarfonshire. Needless to say, he was not one of the **Owens**, original owners of Plas Du, two of whom figure elsewhere in this work, for they had left the place before his time. Where exactly his family came from is far from clear. **Ebenezer Thomas** (Eben Fardd), in *Y Brython*, iv, 422, places them at Elernion in the north of Llanaelhaiarn, Caernarfonshire; **John Jones** (Myrddin Fardd), in *Enwogion Sir Gaernarfon*, 74, gives Bryn Bychan, in the south of that parish, as their habit; **J. E. Griffith** (*Pedigrees*, 257), while locating them at Bryn Bychan, places that house in Nantlle. It seems on the whole better to regard **Griffith's** 'Nantlle' as a slip, to take **Thomas's** 'Elernion' as a general statement of ancestry, and to accept **Jones's** 'Bryn Bychan in Llanaelhaiarn' as fixing the particular branch of the family to which John Evans belonged, before they moved to Plas Du. **Jones** indeed asserts that he was born at Bryn Bychan, before the removal; this point cannot be decided - Evans's benefaction to Llanaelhaiarn parish might have been an act of piety either to his 'native' parish or to the parish which had been the cradle of his ancestors.

The history of his university career, again, is highly obscure. **Browne Willis** says that he was at Jesus College, Oxford, and Foster identifies him with the John Evans who graduated from Jesus in 1681, took his M.A. in 1684, and his doctorate in 1695 - there is no date of matriculation, nor statement of age. But our man was in India in 1678. Again, the *D.N.B.* tentatively suggests the John Evans who graduated from Jesus in 1671 - matriculated 5 May 1667 at 19, M.A. from Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1674 (Venn). But this man hailed from Denbighshire, being the son of a cleric named David Evans, of Trofarth, Abergele - Venn however adds 'of Caernarvonshire.' Foster, however, has yet another entry: 'John, son of Bonner, of Plasdu,' who matriculated at Gloucester Hall, 6 March 1667/8, aged 16; no graduation recorded, and no reference to Jesus College. One can hardly neglect this entry; the 'Plasdu' is significant, and according to **Griffith's** pedigree the bishop's father was named 'Ynyr Evans' - if the lad was called 'John ab Ynyr,' or 'Bynyr,' the record might easily have muddled the name. As things stand, the matter must be left in doubt. If we take it that the bishop was the Trofarth Evans, his birth would be in 1648; if the son of 'Bonner,' it would be 1651 or 1652.

The rest of the story is plain sailing. In 1678 Evans went out to Bengal, as chaplain under the East India Co., but was transferred to Madras in 1692. In India, he seems to have feathered his nest diligently, but to have got on badly with the company's officials, who early in 1692 threatened to stop his pay. By April 1698 (at latest) he was home again, and became rector of Llanaelhaiarn (**Browne Willis**) - oddly enough there is no record of his institution in **A. Ivor Pryce's** lists. At the end of 1701 he was elected bishop of Bangor, and consecrated 4 January 1701/2; he was a very strong Whig. Nothing that we know suggests that he did anything at Bangor, but such as he was, he was the last Welsh bishop of the see till **Daniel Lewis Lloyd** was appointed in 1890. In January 1715/16 he was translated to Meath. He died at Dublin, 22 March 1723/4; he left a good deal of money to the Irish Church and to the commissioners of Queen Anne's Bounty, and £140 for the rectory of Llanaelhaiarn.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

and other sources named above

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