

## EVANS, DANIEL SILVAN (1818 - 1903), cleric, translator, editor, and lexicographer

**Name:** Daniel Silvan Evans

**Date of birth:** 1818

**Date of death:** 1903

**Spouse:** Margaret Evans (née Walters)

**Child:** J. H. Silvan Evans

**Parent:** Sarah Evans

**Parent:** Silvanus Evans

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** cleric, translator, editor, and lexicographer

**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing; Religion; Scholarship and Languages

**Author:** Richard Edmund Hughes

Born at Fron Wilym Uchaf, LlanarthLlanarth, Cardiganshire, 11 January 1818, son of Silvanus and Sarah Evans. From 1838 to 1840 he was at **Thomas Phillips's** school at Neuadd-lwyd, where he began to preach among the Independents. In December 1840 he went to Brecon Independent College, but his stay there was short. Thereafter for five years he kept school. In 1843 he published a collection of poems and essays, *Blodeu Ieuainc*; in 1846 appeared *Telynegion*.

He married Margaret, daughter of Walter Walters, Hendre, Cardiganshire, joined the Established Church, and in 1845-6 entered S. David's College, Lampeter, where he became in 1847 lecturer in Welsh. Leaving Lampeter in 1848 he was ordained deacon and appointed curate of Llan-degwning Llan-degwning in Llŷn; he was ordained priest in 1849. In 1850 he edited *Elfennau Gallofyddiaeth* (mechanics), and in 1851 appeared *Elfennau Seryddiaeth*. In 1847 he started publishing *An English and Welsh Dictionary*, the first volume being completed in 1852, and the second in 1858. He published an edition of **Ellis Wynne's** *Bardd Cwsc* in 1853, and in 1854 a 3rd edition of **Edward Samuel's** translation of Grotius's *De Veritate* (*Gwirionedd y Grefydd Gristionogol*). He was editor of *Y Brython* from 1858 to 1860. In 1852 he was appointed to the curacy of Llangian in Llyn, where he remained until 1862. He contributed articles to *Y Gwyddoniadur* up to 1856, when his little volume on orthography appeared, entitled *Llythraeth yr Iaith Gymraeg*. In 1862 he was presented to the living of Llan-ym-Mawddwy, Meirionnydd, where, between 1866 and 1869, he edited *Gwaith Walter Davies* (**Gwallter Mechain**), in three volumes. He had meanwhile (1864) edited *Y Marchog Crwydrad: Hen Ffuglith Gymreig* and another edition of *Y Bardd Cwsc*, 1865. In 1868 he contributed translations to **Skene's** *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*. In 1869 he edited **William Rowlands's** *Cambrian Bibliography*; three instalments of an appendix to this publication appeared between 1870 and 1875 in *Revue Celtique*. In 1870 he contributed to a Breton Roman Catholic liturgy, *Liherieu hag Avieleu*, and from 1871 to 1875 he was editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*.

He was preferred to Llanwrin, Montgomeryshire, in 1876, and there he remained until his death. In 1876 he edited **Thomas Stephens's** *Literature of the Kymry and Gwaith y Parchedig Evan Evans* (**Ieuan Brydydd Hir**), and was co-editor (1876) with **David Saunders** (1831 - 1892) and **David Howell** (1831 - 1903) of *Llyfr Gweddi Gyffredin*. This was a special prayer book for the use of Aber-carn chapel, Monmouth. In 1878 he edited **Lewis Morris's** *Celtic Remains*. He published in 1882, conjointly with **John Jones** (Ivon, 1820 - 1898), *Ysten Sioned neu Y Gronfa Gymmysg*, and in 1883 he edited [Sadler's] *Athrawiaeth yr Eglwys yn Wirionedd y Bibl*. The honorary degree of B.D. had been conferred upon him in 1868 by S. David's College, Lampeter. In 1873 he was appointed examiner in Welsh at Lampeter, and in 1875 professor of Welsh at University College, Aberystwyth, a post which he retained on a part-time basis from 1878 to 1884.

His thirty years' editorial activity was merely a by-product of his lexicographical industry which culminated in the publication of four parts of his *Geiriadur Cymraeg* between 1887 and 1896. In the early seventies he gradually became emancipated from **William Owen Pughe's** ideas through contacts made with several young scholars whose scientific training must have deeply influenced him; among these were **John Peter**, (Sir) **John Rhys**, and **John Gwenogvryn Evans**. Through the good offices of **Benjamin Williams** (Gwynionydd, 1821 - 1891), incumbent of Llanover, **lady Llanover** consented to defray a portion of the costs of publishing the Welsh dictionary. The first part appeared in 1887, but the first volume - up to the letter C - was not completed until 1893. The first instalment of the second part appeared in 1896. In 1898 he published *Telyn Dyfi: Manion ar Fesur Cerdd*. In recognition of his lexicographical work, Silvan Evans was in 1897 awarded the medal of the Cymmrodorion Society, and elected to a three-year Fellowship of £100 a year at Jesus College, Oxford. A grant from the Civil List was secured for him the same year to enable him to complete his task. In 1901 the University of Wales conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.Litt. Ecclesiastical honours fell to his lot; he was made an honorary canon of Bangor in 1888, prebendary of Llanfair in 1891, chancellor of Bangor in 1895, and chaplain to the bishop of Bangor in 1899. The dictionary was never completed, although most of the material was ready, for Evans died 13 April 1903, and was buried in Cemaes churchyard, near Llanwrin. A fifth and final portion of the work was published in 1906 by **Walter Spurrell** - up to the letter E.

Silvan Evans suffered grievous bereavements, losing three sons and three daughters before 1887, and his wife, who was killed in a road accident near Machynlleth, in 1889. His only surviving son, J. H. Silvan Evans, a graduate of Jesus College, Oxford, gave his whole-time services to the publication of the dictionary, although his name appears, with that of his father, on part iv only.

### Author

Richard Edmund Hughes

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## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Daniel Silvan Evans](#)

## Images

NLW: [Daniel Silvan Evans](#)

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