

EVANS, Sir SAMUEL THOMAS (1859 - 1918), politician and judge

Name: Samuel Thomas Evans
Date of birth: 1859
Date of death: 1918
Parent: Margaret Evans
Parent: John Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: politician and judge
Area of activity: Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: David James Llewelfryn Davies

Born at Skewen, Glamorganshire, May 1859, the only son of John Evans, a local grocer, and Margaret Evans, both natives of Cardiganshire. After attending the Collegiate School at Swansea, he proceeded to Aberystwyth College and took a London degree. Overcoming his parents' wish that he should enter the ministry, he became articled at Neath and qualified as a solicitor in 1883. He served on the town council at Neath and took an active part in local politics. In 1890 he was returned to Parliament for Mid-Glamorgan, which he represented continuously for the next twenty years. His abilities and his gifts as a debater made him a prominent member of the Welsh Parliamentary Party. In 1891 he was called to the Bar and he soon acquired a large practice on the South Wales circuit. He took silk in 1901, being the last Q.C. to be created by queen Victoria. In 1908 he was made recorder of Swansea; in the same year he was appointed Solicitor-General. In 1910 he became president of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division of the High Court. He was a G.C.B. and a member of the Privy Council.

It was while presiding over the Prize Court during the first world war that Evans established his reputation as an international jurist of the first rank. The spirit in which he approached his task was expressed in his famous dictum: 'Precedents handed down from earlier days should be treated as guides to lead and not as shackles to bind,' and the mastery with which he developed established principles to meet the changed conditions of modern war was recognized even in neutral countries whose interests were adversely affected by his decisions. Along with [Sir Leoline Jenkins](#) and lord Stowell he ranks as one of the principal builders of British prize law.

S. T. Evans died 13 September 1918 and was buried at Skewen. He was an honorary L.D. (1909) of the University of Wales, and a freeman of Swansea and Neath. There is a bust of him by Sir G. Frampton, R.A., in the Royal Courts of Justice and there are portraits at the Middle Temple and at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. After his death a fund was raised by public subscription to perpetuate his memory, and this was transferred to the University of Wales to establish the Sir Samuel Evans prize to be awarded annually to the best candidate in the faculty of law. For some manuscripts by or relating to him see [NLW MS 2231B](#) , [NLW MS 2232B](#) , [NLW MS 2233B](#) , [NLW MS 2234B](#) , [NLW MS 2235A](#) , [NLW MS](#) , [NLW MS 2236C](#) , [NLW MS 2237C](#) , [NLW MS 2238A](#) , [NLW MS 2239A](#) , [NLW MS 2240A](#) , [NLW MS 2241C](#) , [NLW MS 2242D](#) .

Author

Professor David James Llewelfryn Davies

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

The Times, 14 September 1918

Western Mail, 14 September 1918

South Wales Daily News, 14 September 1918

his contribution to the history of British prize law may be studied in standard works on international law such as

Hall, Pearce Higgins (ed.), *A treatise on International Law* (1924) (8th ed.)

Lauterpacht (ed.), *Oppenheim's International Law* (1905, 1940), xi (6th ed.)

Further Reading

T. Marchant Williams, *Welsh Members of Parliament, 1894* (Cardiff 1894)

NLW Archives: [Mid-Glamorgan Election, Monday Next, 8th October, 1900: Kindly Vote For S. T. Evans...](#)

NLW Archives: [General Election 1906 Wales and Monmouthshire. A Souvenir containing photographs, biographical sketches etc., of all the Welsh MPs: S.T. Evans](#)

Images

NLW Archives: Sir S. T. Evans, K.C.

Additional Links

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