

JONES, JOHN, Maes-y-garnedd Merioneth, and his family 'the regicide'

Name: John Jones
Spouse: Katherine Jones (née Cromwell)
Spouse: Margaret Jones (née Edwards)
Child: John Jones
Parent: Elin Jones (née Wynn)
Parent: Thomas Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: 'the regicide'
Home: Maes-y-garnedd
Area of activity: Law; Military; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

John Jones (1597? - 1660), 'the regicide,' was a younger son of Thomas Jones, Maes-y-garnedd, Merionethshire, lineal descendant of Ynwr Vychan (lord of Nannau and ancestor of the family of Nannau, through a younger son who was also ancestor of the Vaughan family of Hengwrt. His mother was Elin, daughter of Robert Wynn of Taltreuddyn, Llanenddwyn, Meirionnydd, descended on her mother's side from Sir Gruffydd Vaughan (exec. 1447) and on her father's from a daughter of Gruffydd Derwas, knight of the body to Henry VI, whose son Tudur Vaughan was ancestor of a line of eminent Irish Joneses (see under Michael Jones, died 1649). John Jones as a younger son was sent to make his way in London, in the service of the Myddelton s, distant kinsmen of his mother through their common descent from Sir John Done; by 1639 he was in employ of Sir Hugh Myddelton's son Sir William. He had a good education, including a competent knowledge of Latin and probably some legal training, though the terms in which he declined a legal commission (2 April 1642) from Sir Owen Wynn of Gwydir suggest that he had not fully qualified. He married, before 1639, Margaret, daughter of John Edwards of Stansty, settling on her in 1643 lands in Llanenddwyn, Llanddwywe, and Llanfair, Meirionnydd, which he had acquired from Myddelton in 1633 (8 June), together with a town house (probably Bryn-y-ffynnon) in Wrexham. They lived successively at Stansty, Uchlaw'r Coed, Llanenddwyn (inherited from his father), and Plas Uchaf Eliseg, Llangollen, until, in June 1644, he was commissioned as captain in the forces raised by the second Sir Thomas Myddelton for the subjugation of North Wales, at first as paymaster and later (November) as captain of foot in the reinforcements bound for North Wales, but driven by storm into Pembroke and used in the South Wales campaign of Rowland Laugharne, where Jones was at the storming of Laugharne castle (December 1644) (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1625-49, Addenda 662; Phillips, Civil War, i, 274-5; Hist. MSS. Comm., 9th R., ii, 443*). By April 1645 he was serving in the siege of Chester, and protesting against the indiscriminate plunder of Welsh goods by his own side. Next year he had become a colonel of horse, and was one of the three envoys sent to negotiate the surrender of Anglesey (30 May to 14 June). Next year (23 September) he succeeded one of his fellow-envoys (now dead) as M.P. for Merioneth. The outbreak of the second Civil War brought him back into the field in June 1648, when he helped to prevent the surprise of Denbigh castle (4 July) and to effect a second reduction of Anglesey (2 October).

Back at Westminster he attended regularly the 'court of justice' which tried Charles I (whom he held responsible for the Irish massacres of 1641), signed the death warrant, and was appointed (13 February 1649) one of the council of six set up by the Rump, and an alderman of Denbigh (September). He celebrated the occasion by having an elaborate pedigree emblazoned by his kinsman Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt. He was assiduous at the council table and a zealous member of the Commission for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales (22 February 1650) till appointed (2 July 1650) to accompany Ludlow to Ireland as first of three commissioners responsible for its civil government; his Welsh duties had to be fitted in with his periodic crossings to and fro from Ireland, where his chief work lay from 1651-4. In 1655 he was made a commissioner for North Wales under Berry in the régime of Major Generals. His first wife, a devout disciple of Morgan Llwyd, had died in Ireland (19 November 1651), having borne eight children, of whom only one survived; and early in 1656 he married Katherine Whetstone (born 1606), sister of Oliver Cromwell and widow of a Roundhead officer (who had previously taken her with him on a Dutch campaign), but herself dubbed Royalist because she recoiled from the king's execution. (*Notes and Queries, VII, ix, £303.*) He settled £300 a year on her, and Oliver added an annuity of £150. The Protector put his brother-in-law on his new Council of State (June), and in August Jones was elected to represent both Denbighshire and Merioneth (choosing the latter constituency) in the 2nd Protectorate parliament, where he was an active debater, especially in the discussions leading to the Humble Petition and Advice. Next year he was removed to Cromwell's 'Other House' with the title (rarely used) of 'lord Jones', and shortly before Cromwell's death he was again made a commissioner for Ireland.

When the Protectorate petered out with the resignation of Richard Cromwell, Jones was a leading spirit in the restored rule of the Rump, serving on the Committee of Safety of seven (7 May 1659) and its successor the Council of State of twenty-one (14 May). He was used mainly in Ireland, though he had to combine his duties there with the governorship of Anglesey (July), where he tried to stem the reaction by keeping his old Puritan and Republican associates in power. On 18 August, Ludlow left him in charge of the army in Ireland, but he was hampered in resisting the schemes of Monck (the drift of which he early realized) by storms which delayed news from England and by lack of authority with the officers, and on 19 January 1660, Monck's adherents there had him arrested and impeached in London with the other Irish commissioners. Released on parole with a pass to Chester (5 May), he visited his son, for whom he vested his property in eleven trustees, and put his papers into safe keeping before returning to London to be arrested in the street (2 June) and - his name having been excluded from the Indemnity Act of 20 August - tried as a regicide. He comported himself with great dignity, and was executed on 17 October 1660.

Archbishop John Williams called him in 1647 'the most universally hated man' in North Wales, but the impression is not confirmed by correspondence about his candidature for the 1656 parliament (*Cal. Wynn Papers, 1834, 2108, 2116, 2118-9, 2122-3*). Henry Cromwell, who distrusted his republicanism, and probably influenced Richard to stop his wife's annuity in March 1660, accused him of having 'acted very corruptly' in Ireland, but the charge lacks corroboration. His speculations in land with the debentures issued on his arrears of pay - including an interest in the crown lordship of Bromfield and Yale (with which he tried to tempt Henry Cromwell), in the ecclesiastical manor of Gogarth (which he offered to re-sell to the Mostyn family), in the manors of Llandegla, Gwytherin, and Meliden (bought by a syndicate for £3,797 in 1650) and Uwchterfyn (c. 1652) and an offer to buy up a mortgage on Brynkinallt (1653) - were normal and legal transactions, and it was on the ground that his absence in Ireland had placed him at a disadvantage in the land sales that parliament in 1657 voted him a further £3,000 in Irish lands to cover outstanding arrears. How much of this wealth (or, for that matter, of his nominal salary of £1,000 as Irish commissioner) ever actually came to his hand may be doubted: certainly he was often in straits for ready

cash in Ireland. Berry and Ludlow both speak warmly of him, and even the biting lampoon of 1657 on Cromwell's 'lords' (*Harleian Miscellany*, iii, 470) dealt gently with Jones.

The depth of his religious convictions is evident in all his letters. He was in regular correspondence with **Morgan Llwyd**, **Vavasor Powell**, and the other leaders of Welsh Puritanism from Ireland, where he had some of **Llwyd's** work printed, though he found him too 'paraboliſal' for the plain man, and **Powell** too fond of hair-splitting and 'disputing'; Jones himself shared Cromwell's dislike of dogmatism and dread of anarchy, religious or political. He shrank from the consequences of a free vote before the Commonwealth had 'time to take root', and defended expedients that shocked the doctrinaire republicans; his hatred of 'feudal tyranny' was based not on Leveller principles, but on that of security for the small freeholder. For all his city upbringing he remained a countryman at heart, with the Welsh countryman's feeling for his family, his shrewdness in bargaining, and his love of rustic imagery. Even his land-hunger was the peasant's rather than the townsman's or the social climber's; in selling he preferred a modest price from the sitting tenant to a fancy one from a speculative rack-renter; he denounced profiteering at the expense of the needy debenture-holder; and when in 1653 his own Merioneth tenants defaulted because a bad season had left their cattle unsaleable, he offered to take as rent lean cattle shipped from Holyhead for fattening in Ireland. In Ireland itself he had more hope of the peasant than of his lord; but here his whole view was distorted by legendary tales of the massacres, and his only constructive proposals were evangelization (preferably from Wales) with firm and uncorrupt government. A tireless and methodical administrator, he recognized his own qualifications as 'too narrow for the Ministers of any Commonwealth, but Sir Th. Moore's.'

He kept in touch with all his family, promising himself to do something for his 'poor relations' in Arduwy as soon as things were settled. He looked after both the spiritual and the temporal interests of his niece Lowry (1623 - 1694), daughter of his eldest brother EDWARD JONES (who had died after a year of marriage, and from whom he probably inherited Bryn-y-ffynnon, Wrexham), and also those of her children - one of whom became father of **Ellis Wynne of Lasynys** - when their father Ellis Wynne of Glynn (whom she married in 1639) died c. 1653; by her second husband, a grandson of **Edmund Prys** she had a son **Edmund Price (1662 - 1718)**, entered as 'pauper' at Jesus College, Oxford, in 1682 (graduating 1685), who became vicar of Clynnog 1692, inherited Maes-y-garnedd, but disposed of Gerddi Bluog (the Prys estate) in 1710. Another brother, HUMPHREY JONES (died c. 1690), mercer, of Paternoster Row, was John's banker, business agent, and executor, and his son's faithful counsellor; Humphrey's own son, THOMAS JONES, went to Oxford in 1666 and became successively vicar of Oswestry, 1680, rector of Darowen, 1684, and vicar of Llangollen, 1702. HENRY JONES, John's third brother, became deputy governor of Dublin under **Sir Theophilus Jones**, died 1649) and was still in Ireland in 1659, but died before 1664. RICHARD JONES, the youngest brother, and his sister Lowry, stayed in Arduwy, and to them John wrote (with some diffidence) in Welsh.

JOHN JONES (died c. 1717)

The regicide's only surviving child, allowed under his father's attainder (12 Car. II, c. 30) to inherit his pre - 1646 estate. Brought up under **Morgan Llwyd's** tuition at Bryn-y-ffynnon, Wrexham, after his mother's death, he settled there on his marriage (2 March 1663) to Mary Paine of Woolwich, step-daughter of his uncle Humphrey Jones (above). The same year he was excommunicated for nonconformity (13 June), and it was probably at Bryn-y-ffynnon that a Dissenting congregation was rounded up next year. The house retained its Dissenting connections under a succession of owners and occupants; even after Jones disposed of it in 1692 to his kinsman, **Sir William Williams (1634 - 1700)**, he retained a leasehold interest, and it was used as a manse for the Independent minister **John Evans (1628 - 1700)**. Jones himself ultimately conformed, and served as under-sheriff for Merioneth in 1679-80; he was pricked as sheriff in December 1687 (when James II was angling for the 'Dissenting interest' in local government), but was displaced a week later by the unimpeachable Tory **Sir Robert Owen of Porkington**. He served his turn as sheriff, however, after the Revolution (25 November 1689), and lived to rejoice at the rejection of the Occasional Conformity Bill in 1703. He gradually disposed of his Merioneth estates, living mainly at Wrexham but dying (c. 1717) at the house of his niece Ann Edwards of Cilhendre, Salop (see under **Edwards of Cilhendre**). He had an only daughter, from whom descend the living representatives of the regicide.

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