

MORGAN, HENRY (1635? - 1688), buccaneer

Name: Henry Morgan
Date of birth: 1635?
Date of death: 1688
Spouse: Elizabeth Morgan (née Morgan)
Gender: Male
Occupation: buccaneer
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements; Anti-Establishment; Travel and Exploration
Author: David Williams

Numerous attempts have been made to identify the parents of Henry Morgan, all based on the assumption that he was related to the **Morgan** family of Tredegar. These attempts have all proved unsatisfactory. The following entry in the *Bristol Apprentice Books (Servants to Foreign Plantations)* can be regarded with virtual certainty as referring to him: ' 1655, February 9. Henry Morgan of Abergavenny, labourer, bound to Timothy Tounsend of Bristoll, cutler, for three years to serve in Barbadoes on the like Conditions.' This was the usual form of indenture for intending emigrants to the West Indies, and the 'like Conditions' meant that he should be paid ten pounds at the end of his service.

Morgan was said, on 21 December 1671, to be about 36 years of age. He would, therefore, have been born about 1635. In 1655, when he emigrated, he was about 20 years of age. Esquemelling, in his *History of the Buccaneers*, 1684, writes: ' He served his time in Barbadoes, and, obtaining his liberty, he took himself to Jamaica, there to seek new fortunes.' Esquemelling speaks of him as immediately engaging in piracy with financial success. He was said, in 1670, to have ' bin in the West Indys 11 or 12 yeares ' and ' by his valour ' to have ' raised himself to what he now is.' He had established himself sufficiently by 1665 to marry Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Morgan of Llannrhymney, who had become deputy-governor of Jamaica in June 1664, and who was, in fact, related to the **Morgan** family of Tredegar.

In 1666 Henry Morgan is found in command of a vessel under the Englishman, Edward Mansfield, a notable buccaneer, and on his death Morgan was elected ' admiral ' by his associates. He received privateering commissions from Sir Thomas Modyford, governor of Jamaica, and, in 1668, he sacked Porto Bello with fiendish cruelty. His greatest exploit was his march across the isthmus of Panama and capture of the town of that name in 1671. This embarrassed the British Government, and Modyford was recalled. His successor reversed Modyford's policy of using privateers for defence against the Spaniards, and Morgan soon followed Modyford as prisoner to England. **William Morgan** of Tredegar at this time speaks of him as ' a relation and formerly a neer neighbour.' He soon obtained the favour of Charles II, and on 23 January 1674, was made deputy-governor of Jamaica. It would appear that he was knighted at the same time. He was buried at Port Royal on 26 August 1688. In his will (proved 14 September 1688) he mentions his sister, Catherine Lloyd, and ' my ever honourable cousin, **Mr. Thomas Morgan** of Tredegar.' His estates in Jamaica were named Lanrumney and Pencarn.

Author

Emeritus Professor David Williams, (1900 - 1978)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

W. Llewelyn Williams, 'Sir Henry Morgan,' in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1903-4

Further Reading

BBC cymrufyw: **Y môr-ladron Cymreig** (accessed August 2019)

Wikipedia Article: **Henry Morgan**

Additional Links

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