

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

John Evans of Bristol

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1939, Vol. 61, 196-201

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JOHN EVANS OF BRISTOL

by C. ROY HUDLESTON

THREE Bristol writers who bore the name John Evans are recorded in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. All three biographies are somewhat inadequate, and in the notes which follow I have tried to fill in some of the gaps.

JOHN EVANS, PRINTER, 1774-1828

The Dictionary states that he was baptised at St. Philip and Jacob Church, Bristol, on 16 January 1774. The registers show that he was the son of David and Mary Evans.

Between 27 June and 28 November 1808 he became proprietor of *The Bristol Mercury*, which had been founded by Bulgin and Rosser in 1790.¹ Before 31 August 1812 he was joined by John Grabham, with whom he continued in partnership until 7 March 1814, when he retired from the firm. He then set up as a printer, and the Bristol directories for the years 1815-17 record the firm of John Evans and Co., printers, 7 St. John street. On 7 August 1817² was published the first number of *The Bristol Observer*, printed by John Sharp, Adam and Eve Lane, Wine Street. About 1820 Henry Savery seems to have acquired control of the paper, and in 1823 the Bristol directory records Evans as printer for the first time. He was then living at 13 Kingsdown Parade. Evans mentions his contributions to the *Observer* on pp. 327 of his *Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol*.

¹ Harold Lewis, *History of the Bristol Mercury*.

² The year 1819 given in the D.N.B. and repeated in *The Bibliographer's Manual of Gloucestershire Literature* III, 28, is a mistake.

Unfortunately the paper collapsed on 1 October 1823, after 322 numbers had been published. After this Evans devoted himself to local history, and he continued to do printing in the old offices of the *Observer*.

In 1824 his *Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol* was published, when he was living at 9 Somerset Street, Kingsdown.³ Financially the book was a failure, and on 9 July 1825 Evans petitioned the Corporation of Bristol for pecuniary relief, stating that he had sustained great loss from the publication of his book. The Corporation voted him £20 on the delivery of four copies.

The obituary notice of Evans in the *Bristol Mirror* states that in none of his printing and publishing enterprises was he fortunate, and 'he therefore quitted the profession and engaged himself as clerk in the Phoenix Glasshouse'. Mr A. C. Powell has recorded the history of this glasshouse⁴ and states that one of the partners was David Evans⁵, a namesake of the father of Evans, and Mayor of Bristol 1802-4.

Towards the end of 1827 Evans lost his wife, and soon afterwards he left Bristol for London, 'in hopes of bettering his condition' as the *Bristol Mirror* says, adding 'for many years he had been acquainted with Mr Maurice . . . who like the subject of this memoir united musical talent with a practical knowledge of printing. Mr Maurice gave him a ready welcome and employed him temporarily in his office until a permanent situation should offer'. In addition to his printing business in Fenchurch Street, Maurice was principal proprietor of the Brunswick Theatre, London, opened on 25 February 1828. Four days later Maurice attended a rehearsal there, and Evans

³ His sister, Miss Evans, was conducting a school for young ladies at this address from 1824 until 1826.

⁴ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, XLVII, 233-8.

⁵ John Evans devotes considerable space to a defence of this man in the *Chronological Outline*, 326-7.

accompanied him. While the rehearsal was in progress the building collapsed, and Maurice and Evans both perished, with ten other persons.

Evans left one son and two daughters, and the *Bristol Mirror* is at pains to point out that it was untrue that one of his daughters was with him in London, with the intention of singing on the stage. 'She never had such intention and is more respectably employed as a teacher'. On 5 March 1828 a circular, appealing for financial help for the children, was issued in Bristol, stating

'There are not few who can testify to the active kindness which he constantly manifested whenever any efforts of his could help to mitigate the calamities of others. There is now, unhappily, but too much reason to solicit from the Public the exercise of the like benevolence in behalf of the Family of this unfortunate Gentleman, consisting of three orphan children . . . of whom the two younger, one from a sickly constitution and the other from extreme youth, are at present unable to contribute to their own support. . . .

'This appeal . . . is made without any communication with his relatives. He has left two sisters, who are engaged in conducting a school⁶ at the Hotwells and who by their exertions have long mainly contributed to the education and support of the deceased's family. . . .'

Vickery's ms. Calendar of Bristol in the Central Library, Bristol, says that £200 was collected for the children.

The son, William Evans, a landscape painter styled 'Evans of Bristol' is recorded in the D.N.B. though his relationship to John Evans is not there mentioned. He died at his home in Marylebone Road, London, in 1859, aged 49.

REV. JOHN EVANS, MISCELLANEOUS WRITER (d. 1831)

On 5 August 1807 a marriage licence was granted to John Evans of St. James *intra*, Bristol, classical

⁶ The school was at 2 Dowry Square.

teacher, a bachelor, and Lucy Hickason, of the same parish, spinster, 20 and upwards, her father, Bernard Hickason, custom house officer, consenting. In *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* for 14 January 1809, J. Evans gave notice that he proposed to devote part of his leisure to an evening institution for a limited number of pupils. 'The objects which the Institution will embrace are the Latin and Greek Classics, Mathematics, Geography, Astronomy and Elocution. The Institution will open at No. 55 College Street on the Evening of Tuesday, January 17th 1809, at Seven o'clock, and be continued on the Evening of every Tuesday and Thursday. . . It is presumed that the Institution will be peculiarly advantageous to those Gentlemen whose Education has been defective as well as to those who wish to retain and improve the knowledge which they acquired at school. . . . Terms six guineas per annum. . . '.

Evans first appears in the Bristol directories in 1810, where his name is given among the dissenting ministers. His address was then 55 College Street, but in 1812 is given as Park Row. On 20 July of that year the *Bristol Mirror* announced: 'In consequence of a recent advertisement by a gentleman of the same name it has been reported that the Rev. John Evans, of Park Row, Bristol, was about to remove to Brockley: Mr Evans thinks himself called upon to contradict such report, and to inform the public that his academy⁷ in Park Row will

⁷ Among his pupils were George and Samuel Lunell, to whom he dedicated his *Companion for the Steam Packet* (1824), saying that to their spirit of enterprise 'Bristol is principally indebted for the first steam packet'. The Lunells were sons of William Peter Lunell, of Brunswick Square, Bristol, who married at Stapleton in 1780 Alicia, daughter of another John Evans (apparently unrelated), a linen draper in Wine Street, Bristol. Another son was William Peter Lunell (1784-1811), upon whose death the Rev. John Evans delivered an *Oration*, printed in 1811 by John Evans I and his partner, Mr Grabham. John Evans I printed two other books by his namesake—the *Remains of William Reed* (1815) and the *Historical Account of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe* (1815).

re-open on Wednesday next, the 22d of July. Mr Evans has lately published "The Ponderer". . .

About 1814 the Academy was moved to Richmond Terrace, Clifton, but by 1816 it had found a new home at No. 1, Somerset Street, Kingsdown. Here Evans's second son Thomas, died in 1818, aged 8.⁸ The academy was again moved in 1823 or 4, this time to Park Row, and it is last mentioned in the Bristol directories of 1825. Within the next few years⁹ Evans left Bristol and went first to Bath, and then to London, where he had an academy. He died there, after a short illness in December 1831. Letters of administration of his estate were granted on 2 April 1832 to Lucy Evans, his widow. In the grant he is described as formerly of Bristol, afterwards of Bath, but late of Euston House Academy, Drummond Street, Euston Square.

JOHN EVANS (fl. 1812)

The D.N.B. suggests that this John Evans, an Anglican clergyman, was probably identical with the John Evans, son of Benjamin Evans of Lydney, who matriculated 4 April 1789, aged 21, at Jesus College, Oxford, and graduated in 1792. When he published his *Tour Through Part of North Wales* in 1800 he described himself as 'B.A., late of Jesus College, Oxford', and there does not appear to be any other John Evans in Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses* who fits this description.

His career is not easy to trace, but in *Farley's Bristol Journal* for 4 January 1806 he announced: 'The Rev. Mr Evans, Graduate of Oxford, Author of *Tours through North and South Wales* respectfully informs those, who have already trusted, or are disposed to entrust young Gentlemen to his care, that he Boards and Instructs a

⁸ F.F.B.J., 19 September 1818.

⁹ The preface to the 4th edition of *The New Guide or Picture of Bristol* is dated Bristol, July 1828.

Select Number, not exceeding eight, on a new and improved plan, much better adapted to facilitate the progress of the Pupil, than that generally adopted at most Classical Schools, and that he pays a particular attention to the important but neglected part of education, English Elocution and Composition. The most unremitting attention, he trusts, will render him deserving of reposed confidence. Terms moderate, Colston's Parade, Dec. 19, 1805'.

Evans's name appears in the Bristol directories for 1806, 1807 and 1808 as living at 3 Colston's Parade, but actually he had left Bristol at the beginning of 1807, when he announced in *Farley's Bristol Journal* for 17 January that he had removed to Winterbourne Court, near Bristol,¹⁰ 'where he instructs a select number of pupils'. After this I have no record of Evans until 1 April 1812, when in his dedication to volume 17 of Brayley and Britton's *Beauties of England and Wales* he gives his address as Delancey Place, Camden Town, London. He died shortly after he had completed the volume, as stated in the next one, but unfortunately I have not been able to discover the exact date of his death.

¹⁰ The history of this house is given in Dr C. H. B. Elliott's *History of Winterbourne*, though Evans's tenancy is not there mentioned.