

EVANS, WILLIAM DAVIES (1790 - 1872), inventor of a chess gambit

Name: William Davies Evans
Date of birth: 1790
Date of death: 1872
Parent: Mary Evans (née Davis)
Parent: John Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: inventor of a chess gambit
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Author: David James Morgan

Eldest son of John Evans, of the parish of St. Dogwells and Mary Davis of the parish of Nevern, who, according to the parish records of Nevern, were married on 12 April 1787. They started life at the farm of Musland, St. Dogwells. William Davies Evans was born on 27 January 1790.

It is almost certain that young Evans was educated at Haverfordwest Grammar School. Unfortunately the school records have been destroyed. In 1804 he went to sea and served in the navy until the Napoleonic wars ended in 1815. Transferred to the postal department, in 1819, he was the captain of a sailing packet, the *Auckland*, running between Milford Haven and Waterford. During this period he played a great deal of chess with a distinguished chess-player, Lieut. Harry Wilson, R.N. It was about 1824, in a steam postal packet, that he invented a game opening that is known the world over and in all the game's literature as 'The Evans Gambit'.

About 1826 Evans created a sensation in the chess world by introducing his opening in a famous game in London when he defeated Alexander McDonnell, the strongest player that Ireland ever produced.

In January 1840 Evans retired on a pension and spent his time at London chess clubs and travelling abroad. He died on 3 August 1872 at 29, Rue Christine, Ostend, Belgium, and is buried in the old cemetery in the town. The inscription on his gravestone reads: 'To the sacred memory of William Davies Evans, formerly Commander in the Post Office and Oriental Steam Services; Superintendent in the Royal Mail Steam Company, and inventor of the system of tri-coloured light for shipping. Also well known in the chess world as the author of the Evans' Gambit.'

Unfortunately, his age is wrongly given as 'eighty years and six months'.

Author

David James Morgan, (1894 - 1978)

Sources

Personal research

researches of W. R. Thomas, *British Chess Magazine*, 1928

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Davies Evans](#)

Additional Links

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