

**JORNAL SUPPLEMENT,
NO. 6; JOHN AP JOHN,
AND EARLY RECORDS OF
FRIENDS IN WALES**

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Jornal supplement, No. 6; John Ap John, and Early Records of Friends in Wales by William Gregory Norris & Norman Penney

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WILLIAM GREGORY NORRIS & NORMAN PENNEY

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FRIENDS' BURIAL GROUND, PONT-Y-MOEL. (Promisplace.)

Photo. T. A. Jones, Pontypool.

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JOHN AP JOHN,
AND EARLY RECORDS OF FRIENDS IN WALES.

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D.=Friends' Reference Library, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.

F.P.T.=“The First Publishers of Truth,” published by the Friends' Historical Society.

Early Years of John ap John.

Amongst the numerous persons who were influenced by the preaching of the earliest associates of George Fox, and who at once engaged actively as Ministers in the "service of Truth," was John ap John, resident near Wrexham in Wales, who soon acquired local influence and prominence. Partly from the difficulty of tracing his ancestry and connections under the manner of continuing names then adopted in Welsh families, it is now scarcely possible to collect particulars which can be relied upon as to his parents and his birth; and only the barest facts of his travels and labours have been preserved. It is just possible to frame a biographical outline from collecting together in consecutive order the accounts which are given in well-known Journals, and in some few other notices which have been preserved; but anything beyond these that would have made us acquainted with his individual character, his life and pursuits at his home, and his influence among his neighbours, is now lost to us. Even the usual Testimony after his decease is not preserved; and the intention of the Meeting for Sufferings, as referred to later, to collect details of his labours and ministry appears to have been left incomplete.

John ap John's residence was at Trevor, a hamlet in the extensive parish of Llangollen, much nearer to Ruabon than to Wrexham. Situated on the mountain side, the village commands a magnificent view of woodland and enclosures of cultivated land, over the Valley of the Dee, and large parts of Cheshire and Shropshire. The immediate locality was then probably chiefly pasture; now it is largely occupied with brick works and

colliery plant. The house which is supposed to have been his paternal home is known as "Plas Eŷa" or "Plas Evan," near to the Sun Inn, and close to the road from Llangollen to Ruabon. It has undergone many alterations, but parts of the old structure remain. Adjacent to it was a small field, an enclosed portion of which was called "the Quakers' Graveyard." But in excavating for the Chester canal, which passes by it, the earth was thrown upon the old graves and gravestones, and the appearance of the surface is changed. The little property remained in the occupation, and most probably in the possession of John ap John, until after the decease of his wife, and possibly it was only on his own removal from the place that it passed into other ownership.

With the hope of ascertaining whether entries existed in the registers of the parish of Llangollen which could be identified as relating to his parents or their children, permission to examine the records was obtained by Alfred N. Palmer, of Wrexham, the most careful of all local historians. The result was not quite disappointing, but the entries are brief, and the name is common. There are entries of the baptism of "John ap John de Trevor Issa," and of "Maria, veh John ap John"; another reads, "Anne, veh John ap John de Trevor, baptizata est secundo die . . . 1632." It may be assumed that these entries relate to our friend, and to two sisters; the abbreviated Welsh term *veh* implying *verch* or *daughter*, and the name of the father being the same as that of the son. It appears probable, therefore, that John ap John was born between 1625 and 1630, at Trevor Issa.

In Cheshire and Denbighshire and in the adjoining counties of Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire, the Puritan party had increased throughout the reign of King James I. In the early years of King Charles I., its leaders in Cheshire had formed a scheme for the purchase of Church property which had fallen into private hands, so that lecturers of Puritan belief might be provided, but it attracted the notice of Archbishop Laud and was by him arbitrarily suppressed. The party had many adherents in and around Wrexham. Its denominational

¹ The name of the month is illegible.