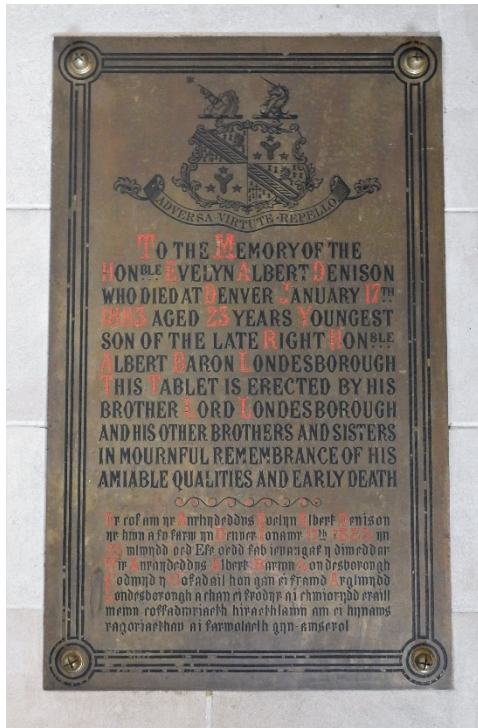


## From Arts & Architecture: Evelyn Albert Denison Memorial Plaque



They say one picture is worth a thousand words. Just the opposite is true of the Cathedral's oldest memorial plaque, in memory of the Honorable Evelyn Albert Denison, youngest son of Albert, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Londesborough. A thousand words might barely suffice to explain the somewhat mysterious existence of this memorial to an English nobleman who died so young in the equally young city of Denver in 1883.

If you've not made a foray into the east tower room, you probably have never noticed the large brass tablet hanging high on the wall beside the door to the north front of the Cathedral. Even if you have remarked on it, reading the words of the plaque is a bit of a challenge because of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century script used for the English text, as well as the plaque's position on the wall.

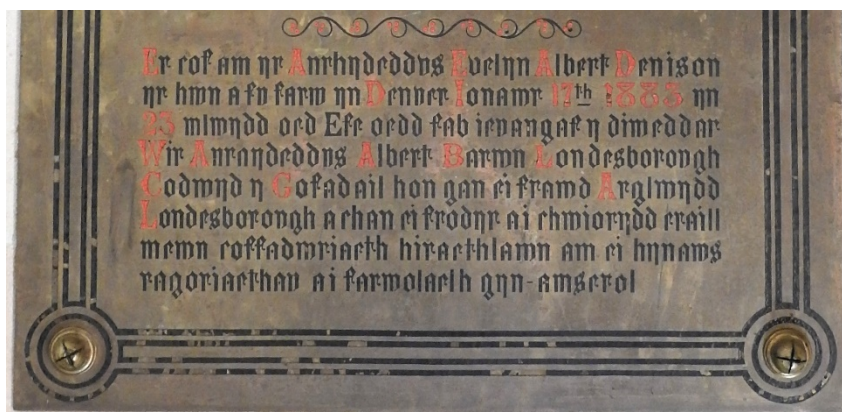
According to a brief article of August 2, 1900, in *The Denver Post*, the memorial tablet was "placed several years ago, upon the wall of the right transept (sic) of Saint John's Cathedral," referring, of course, to the first Cathedral, destroyed by fire in 1903. The *Post* article then quotes the English text, and states "Under this [English text] follows the same inscription in old English Latin text."

Evelyn Albert Denison's memorial plaque survived the 1903 fire with a little damage to the enamel work that delineates the text, the crest of the Denison family at the top, and the decorative framing and scrollwork. The English text of the memorial is:

*To the memory of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Evelyn Albert Denison who died at Denver January 17<sup>th</sup> 1883 aged 23 years Youngest son of the late Right Hon<sup>ble</sup> Albert Baron Londesborough This tablet is erected by his brother Lord Londesborough and his other brothers and sisters in mournful remembrance of his amiable qualities and early death.*

Separated from the English memorial by a band of scrollwork, the bottom text, in an even more ornate script, is indeed a translation of the English...but it is not "old English Latin text," as reported by the *Post* article. Rather, it's a formal variety of Welsh used for things such as obituaries and, as in this case, memorial tablets. According to members of the Welsh Club of Preston, Lancashire, England, it translates roughly to the English text above it.

Mystery added to mystery.... Why a Welsh-language memorial to an English aristocrat with connections to London and to the family seat at Grimston Park, near Tadcaster, North Yorkshire, England...and as little apparent connection to Wales as he had to Denver?



an extended story of young Evelyn Denison's journeys, further aiding the unraveling of the history of the memorial.

The sad history emerged from archived articles in both the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* and *The Denver Post*.

Separated in their publication by some 17 years, in both cases they are obituaries. An article—another obituary—appeared in *The Staffordshire* (England) *Advertiser*, in February 1883. It contained

The brief version goes like this— Evelyn Albert Denison was the youngest child of Baron Londesborough and his second wife, Ursula Lucy Grace Bridgeman, of a prominent Staffordshire family. Evelyn's father Albert died in 1860, when Evelyn was not yet a year old, and his mother remarried Otho Augustus Lord FitzGerald. According to the *Advertiser* article, in 1878, when Evelyn was 19, he had a serious quarrel with his stepfather, causing him to leave England nearly penniless, and land in Belgium. From Belgium he enlisted as a cabin boy on a German vessel bound for Philadelphia, where, still without funds, he got work as a strawberry picker. From Philadelphia he migrated to the west and ended up in Colorado. For a while, he considered sheep ranching in Greeley.

By 1880 Evelyn had arrived in Denver. In ill health, he was taken in by a Welsh couple who lived at 1615 Humboldt Street. John and Catherine (Phillips) Jones cared for the young man and he became part of their family, which included three daughters. In 1881 or 1882, Evelyn mysteriously disappeared from the Jones household. According to *The Denver Post* obituary for John Jones (2 August 1900) they "searched for him everywhere, and grieved for him in a measure...and at



last...concluded they would never see him again." A few months later, a letter arrived from England, explaining Evelyn's true identity, which he had previously not disclosed. He also shared that he had returned to England to receive his inheritance, a large portion of which he subsequently left to the Joneses, although the Denison family contested the will. Ultimately John and Catherine Jones relinquished all claims to an inheritance.

After another few months, Evelyn returned to Denver, and to the Jones family's Humboldt residence, in even worse health than when he left. Catherine Jones nursed him as best she could, but on 17 January 1883, Evelyn Albert Denison succumbed to "consumption" and died in the home of the Denver family who took him in. John Jones contacted Dean Hart and asked the Dean if he might secure a memorial for young Evelyn Albert.

According to the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* article of 3 August 1900—an obituary for John Jones—Dean Hart went to England sometime after young Denison’s death and secured the promise of a memorial tablet from his family. The tablet that now hangs in the east tower room of Saint John’s Cathedral was created around 1884 and installed in the “right” or south transept of the first Saint John’s Cathedral.

Evelyn Albert Denison’s funeral took place, with much ceremony and many mourners from Denver’s Welsh Cambrian and Albion (English) organizations in attendance, on the afternoon of January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1883 at Saint John’s Cathedral, with Dean Hart officiating. His body, in a mahogany, glass-topped coffin, was buried at Riverside Cemetery, and the Jones family erected a monument to him that still stands.

More than a century after his memorial plaque was placed in the east tower room of Saint John’s Cathedral, the tragic story of his death so young is now a known part of the treasured history of Saint John's Cathedral.

