

LEWIS (and OWEN of Tyddyn-y-garreg, Dolgelley, and HUMPHREY (and OWEN), of Llwyn-du, Llangelynnin, Merioneth

Two linked families which were very prominent in the history of Quakerism in Merioneth.

I. Lewis, son of John Gruffydd ap Hywel ap Gruffydd of Derwas, died 8 August 1598, was married to Elin, daughter of Hywel ap Gruffydd; from these were descended four brothers, ELLIS, OWEN, GRUFFYDD, and RHYS. The remainder of this paragraph is concerned with the second of these, Owen Lewis I (died 1658?), and his descendants - it will be noticed that the heir bore the names ' Lewis ' and ' Owen ' in alternate generations, but it is not infrequent for the same person to bear each of the names, at various times, as a surname. Owen Lewis I's son was Lewis Owen I, of whom we know little; then comes the latter's son, Owen Lewis II (1623 - 1686), the first Quaker in the family. He died 22 June 1686, aged 63; he had married, (1), 21 February (?) 1641/2, Margaret, daughter of Rowland Ellis of Gwanas and grand-daughter of Ellis Lewis, the eldest of the four brothers named above; she died at the age of 42 c. 1663-4, having borne six children. The widower then married, (2), c. 1675-6, Catherine Puw of Gyfannedd (Llangelynnin - another Quaker family), and by her had five children; after his death she and her son Ellis migrated to Ireland (1690) and thence (1708) to Pennsylvania. Owen Lewis II's heir was Lewis Owen II (1647? - 1699; probably his was the christening recorded at Dolgelley on 24 January 1646/7), who married Elin Ellis (or Morris), daughter of Ellis Morris of Dol-gun. Lewis Owen II was followed in 1699 by his heir, Owen Lewis III, whose will was proved 20 April 1744, and he by his heir, Lewis Owen III. The latter died intestate, and administration was granted (17 September 1765) to his widow, Jane, daughter of **Charles Lloyd (IV) of Dolobran** - see the article on the **Lloyd** family of Dolobran.

II. The Llwyn-du family issued, on one side, from Rhys, the fourth of the Lewis brothers named at the beginning of the previous paragraph. One of his daughters, ELIN, married OWEN HUMPHREY I ap Huw ap Dafydd ap Hywel ap Gronw, of Llangelynnin. Their son, HUMPHREY OWEN I 'ap Huw,' of Llwyn-du, 'gent.', married Elizabeth Powell of Llangynog, Montgomeryshire. Of their numerous children, four were: Owen Humphrey II (below), JOHN, who emigrated to Pennsylvania, SAMUEL, who also emigrated but returned to Llangelynnin and died there in 1677, and ANNE, who married Ellis ap Rees of Bryn Mawr (Dolgelley) and became the mother of **Rowland Ellis**. OWEN HUMPHREY II (1629 - 1695? - christened 13 April 1629) became a very prominent Quaker, after having been a disciple of **Morgan Llwyd**; his name (with those of Owen Lewis II of Tyddyn-y-garreg (below), and others), appears in a letter written to **Morgan Llwyd**; he was brought before the magistrates in April 1654 for protesting against the Protector; with Owen Lewis II, again, he was on a county committee (July 1659) concerned with financing Harrison's forces; and the two friends were imprisoned in the spring of 1660. He is frequently mentioned in the Quaker records of the ensuing period, and as has been indicated, two of his brothers were Friends. It was he who gave the Friends their burial ground, Bryn Tallwyn, on Llwyn-du land. He was followed by his son, HUMPHREY OWEN II, born some time after 1653, whose will was proved in 1717. Humphrey Owen II's heir was his daughter ANNE, who married Owen Lewis III of Tyddyn-y-garreg.

III. A more detailed account can now be given of some members of the Tyddyn-y-garreg family, whose names and dates have been specified in the introductory paragraph. Other lands in Dolgelley and Llanfachreth parishes are associated with the family. Tyddyn-y-garreg itself was a substantial freehold: its 'stint' of cattle on the common pasture of 'Tir-stent' was 16, the largest number but one (18), then follows, at a respectful distance, the next (9); the head of the house is styled 'esq.' in legal documents. As has already been said, OWEN LEWIS II was a Quaker, and shared the activities and tribulations of his friend Owen Humphrey II (above); when **Richard Davies** the Quaker (1635 - 1708), visited Tyddyn-y-garreg, Owen Lewis had just got back from prison, and in the ensuing years we have frequent mention of distraint upon him for tithe. He too, like his friend, gave the Quakers a burial ground on his land; and the Friends of the district for a very long time held divine services in Tyddyn-y-garreg 'parlour.'

LEWIS OWEN II

is perhaps better known as a poet. One of his poems was included in *Blodeugerdd Cymry* (284-5), and *Cantref Meirionydd* prints (232-4) a set of englynion addressed by him to the poet **Siôn Dafydd Las** of Nannau (John Davies, died 1694) in rebuke of the bard's irregular life; see also **NLW MS 559B**, **Cwrwmawr MS 128A**, and Swansea MS. 2. None the less, he too was a Quaker. In view of the custom (see the introductory paragraph) of calling members of this family 'Lewis Owen' or 'Owen Lewis,' without discrimination, even in legal documents, we cannot be certain whether it was Lewis Owen II or Owen Lewis II who was fined in January 1685 for preaching in the house of Bodferin in Llŷn, nor can we tell which was the 'Lewis Owen' who wrote to America to John ap Thomas in 1681. But the date (1696) shows that it was to Lewis Owen II that **Rowland Ellis** sold Bryn Mawr, and it was ' Lewis Owen of Tyddyn-y-garreg ' who, with Humphrey Owen (II) of Llwyn-du, attested the marriage of **Rowland Ellis**'s daughter in the same year. And from 1678 till his death, the letters of introduction sent by the Tyddyn-y-garreg Friends' Meeting to Pennsylvania, though signed 'Owen Lewis,' are in Lewis Owen II's hand. His brother, ROWLAND OWEN, like him, was a poet.

Lewis Owen II's eldest son, OWEN LEWIS III, was also a Quaker. **John Kelsall** visited him at Tyddyn-y-garreg in 1701, mentions him in 1709, and reports in 1721 the receipt of a letter from ' Owen Lewis ' about translating a Quaker pamphlet into Welsh. But when he visited him 'in his sickness' in 1731, the visit was to Llwyn-du - for Owen Lewis III had married Anne, daughter of Humphrey Owen II. It is clear that when his father-in-law died Owen Lewis III moved to Llwyn-du. A deed (printed in *Mont. Coll.*, xv., 415-20) sealed 24 February 1738 provides for the future of the lands united by this marriage: the elder son, Lewis Owen III, was to live at Tyddyn-y-garreg, and his younger brother HUMPHREY OWEN at Llwyn-du. The will of Owen Lewis III ('of Llwyn-du'), proved in 1744, tells us a good deal about the family and its possessions; it names the widow, Anne, three sisters of Owen Lewis 's, and his sons Lewis Owen III and Humphrey. It names also his brother ELLIS LEWIS (1677 - 1764), who is left 'the furniture in the lower room above the parlour at Tyddyn-y-garreg ' - for Ellis Lewis was the Quaker minister of the flock that worshipped in that parlour; he was also a ' public friend ' (i.e. a travelling preacher), and attended meetings in London; **Kelsall** met him on his way there in 1728, and tells us that he began preaching at 13, attributing to him, however, a rather incredible age in 1728. Ellis Lewis died 23 November 1764, and was buried in his home burial ground. The will of John Owen of Llwyn-du (1739) had three executors: Owen Lewis III, Ellis Lewis, and their cousin HUGH ROWLAND of Dewisbren (also named in Owen Lewis III's will), son of that Rowland Owen the poet who was Owen Lewis II's second son. These three were trustees of all the property belonging to the Quaker congregations of the district; when the 1738 deed of partition (above) was executed, the two burial grounds were excluded from the partition and conveyed to them as special trustees (their subsequent history is dealt with below).

Owen Lewis III was succeeded by his heir LEWIS OWEN III (died, apparently, in the middle of 1765); he was probably the ' Lewis Owen of Tyddyn-y-garreg ' who was sent to **Kelsall** in November 1729 to learn the iron-smelting trade; as was said in the introductory paragraph, he married **Jane Lloyd**, of the iron-master family of **Dolobran**. The resident line of Tyddyn-y-garreg ended with an heiress who made a distant marriage. The Quaker 'Meeting' was now removed to Dewisbren, the home of Hugh Rowland. Hugh's son was ROWLAND OWEN, father of DOROTHY OWEN; she became minister of the little cause - and was buried in the burial ground 17 July 1793, aged 42. A year before her death Dorothy had built the Friends a meeting-house - the only one in the county, and one of the only three (another was at Dolobran) in North Wales. But the Friends were now becoming fewer and fewer - by the middle of the 19th cent, there were only three worshippers. In 1847 the Independents were given permission to use the building; in December 1854 they bought it outright (with the burial ground) from the trustees and named it ' Tabor.'

The burial ground at Bryn Tallwyn (there never was a meeting-house there) suffered a similar fate. In December 1756 the trustees of both grounds, Ellis Lewis, the minister, and Hugh Rowland (above) conveyed both to ' Abraham Darby and others,' i.e. to the general body of the Friends. In 1876 the Wesleyans of Llwyngwril got permission to use the unoccupied part of Bryn Tallwyn ground.

Sources

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