

OWEN family, of Bodeon (Bodowen), Anglesey

Bodeon stands in the parish of Llangadwaladr, Anglesey, within easy distance of the mansion of Bodorgan. There was at times much political affinity between the two families but (curiously enough) hardly any marriage alliances. OWEN AP HUGH of Bodeon was quite a prominent man in Anglesey in the early age of Elizabeth, sheriff twice, and Member of Parliament in 1545 for Newborough (according to the old order). His son, the first Sir HUGH OWEN, was a man of law, and recorder of the town of Carmarthen; this position enabled him to win the hand of Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of **George Wirriott** of Orielton in Pembroke. When the Civil War broke out the attitude of the family, both in Anglesey and Pembrokeshire, was indeterminate and non-committal; he would be a clever man who could say whether the second Sir Hugh favoured the king or the Parliament, so taciturn was he, and so close he kept his secrets. In Anglesey the family was represented by colonel HUGH OWEN and HENRY OWEN of Maesoglan, two brothers, and two cousins to the second Sir Hugh; there is a striking memorial to the colonel on one of the walls of Llangadwaladr church, erected by his wife Ann in 1660, leaving the undoubted impression that he was a stout and gallant Royalist. The two brothers were named in February 1648, as commissioners of assessment to levy money in Anglesey for the upkeep of the Parliamentary forces, but in July of the same year the two were signing the fiery proclamation preliminary to the Anglesey insurrection, and the two had to sign the disastrous articles of surrender in October; for all that, Henry was sheriff of Anglesey in 1651 and Hugh in 1653. 'Puritan' sheriffs they might be, but that did not prevent the member of their family who was Member of Parliament for Pembrokeshire after the Restoration, from voting for all the penal laws of the Cavalier Parliament; and when James II expected all the doctors of literature and justices of the peace of Wales to come to Ludlow in 1687 to say yes to his new policy of toleration, the then Sir Hugh Owen, like many other Anglican die-hards, stayed at home, pleading that he was sick at Haverfordwest. The cumulative effect of the **Orielton** attachment and marriages with important Pembrokeshire families gradually undermined the Owen influence in Anglesey; there is excellent proof in the Anglesey elections of 1708 and 1710, when a desperate effort was made, under the leadership of **Owen Meyrick** of Bodorgan, to dethrone the **Bulkeleys** from the political dictatorship of Anglesey. There is no doubt that Sir Arthur Owen sympathised strongly with the crusade of his neighbour **Meyrick**, but instead of concentrating on winning the county for the Whigs, he himself was nominated candidate for the Anglesey boroughs and for the Pembrokeshire seat as well, while his son Wirriott contested the boroughs. The upshot was that Sir Arthur lost the Anglesey boroughs; in Pembrokeshire they were both successful; **Owen Meyrick** was defeated in 1708 and again in 1710. Pembrokeshire was represented in Parliament by some member of the **Orielton** family no less than twenty-six times, and the boroughs by some other member no less than twenty-six times. For Anglesey and its boroughs there is only the name of Owen ap Hugh in 1545 and Lewis ap Owen twice in the reign of Elizabeth (he was a member of the Fron-deg branch in the parish of Llangaffo). Surprisingly it was very seldom that Bodeon had a church dignitary on its lists; it was once believed that **Dr. Owen Lewis** (died 1594), Roman Catholic bishop of Cassano near Naples, was brother to the first Sir Hugh Owen, but according to the expert genealogist, **bishop Humphrey Humphreys**, he was the son of a well-to-do farmer in the parish of Llangadwaladr. The name of a member of a younger branch of Bodeon - Hugh Owen again - was on the books of both Jesus College in Oxford and Jesus College in Cambridge; he became a D.D., and ended his days (died 1810) as rector of Aberffraw, and canon and precentor of Bangor.

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(Pembrokeshire)

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