

OWEN, ELLIS (1789-1868), farmer, antiquary, and poet

Name: Ellis Owen
Date of birth: 1789
Date of death: 1868
Parent: Ann Owen (née Thomas)
Gender: Male
Occupation: farmer, antiquary, and poet
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; History and Culture; Nature and Agriculture; Poetry
Author: William Rowlands

Born at Cefn-y-meysydd Isaf, Ynyscynhaearn, Eifionydd, Caernarfonshire, 31 March 1789. He was unmarried and spent his days at Cefn-y-meysydd with his mother and sisters. He died 27 January 1868, and was buried at Ynyscynhaearn, near Pentrefelin, 31 January 1868.

He received his early education in a school held in Penmorfa church; **David Owen** (Dewi Wyn o Eifion) was one of his contemporaries. He afterwards attended a school at Shrewsbury, where he learnt English, and spent the rest of his life as a farmer at Cefn-y-meysydd. He held several minor offices in the neighbourhood, such as churchwarden, inspector of weights and measures for the county, president and secretary of the Calvinistic Methodist Sunday Schools in Llyn and Eifionydd, secretary of the Bible Society for the Tremadoc district, and various other societies. As an antiquary he took great interest in local and county history, and he contributed articles to magazines, e.g. *Seren Gomer*, *Y Drysorfa*, *Y Gwladgarwr*, and *Y Brython* (Tremadoc). He was highly esteemed in his day as a literary critic and antiquary, and in the year of his death was elected F.S.A.

At that period Eifionydd was well known for its bards and literary men, and in 1846 Ellis Owen established the Eifionydd Literary Society at Cefn-y-meysydd to foster local culture. This society flourished for twelve years, and there the young farmers of the district foregathered to discuss literary and educational topics, under the guidance of Ellis Owen. The first secretary of the society was Thomas Jones, Cefn-y-meysydd Uchaf, who was afterwards pastor of Tabor Congregational church Pentrefelin; and bards such as **Ebenezer Thomas** (Eben Fardd), **David Owen** (Dewi Wyn), and **Morris Williams** (Nicander), used to visit the society often.

Ellis Owen was also regarded as a sound adjudicator, and he was co-adjudicator with **Evan Evans** (Ieuan Glan Geirionydd) on the chair poem at the Gordoffigon eisteddfod, Liverpool, 1840, when **Eben Fardd** won the prize for his awdl 'Job'; he was also one of the secretaries of the Tremadoc eisteddfod in 1851. As a bard he was not as eminent as his contemporaries, **Dewi Wyn** and **Robert Williams** (**Robert ap Gwilym Ddu**); but he composed a number of short poems and englynion, and he wrote scores of epitaphs at the request of friends and neighbours. His poems and essays were published in a volume entitled *Cell Meudwy* by his friend **Robert Isaac Jones** (Alltud Eifion) at Tremadoc in 1877. A number of his manuscripts are now in the N.L.W.

His mother, Anne (Thomas), was sister to the antiquaries **John Thomas** (1736 - 1769) and **Richard Thomas** (1753 - 1780) - see **J. E. Griffith**, *Pedigrees*, 359.

Author

William Rowlands

Sources

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T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen... from the earliest times to the present* (1908)

Josiah Thomas Jones, *Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol o Enwogion Cymru* (Aberdŵr 1867-70), ii, 333

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