

OWEN, GEORGE (c. 1552 - 1613), historian, antiquary, and genealogist

Name: George Owen
Date of birth: c. 1552
Date of death: 1613
Spouse: Ancred Owen (née Obiled)
Spouse: Elisabeth Owen (née Philipps)
Child: Ursula Mathias (née Owen)
Child: Alban Owen
Child: Evan Owen
Child: George Owen
Parent: Elisabeth Owen (née Herbert)
Parent: William Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian, antiquary, and genealogist
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Bertie George Charles

Born c. 1552 at Henllys, in the parish of Nevern, north Pembrokeshire, the eldest son of **William Owen** (c. 1486 - 1574), a successful lawyer who purchased the barony of Cemais of John Tuchet, lord Audley, in 1543, and became **lord of Cemais**. George Owen's mother was Elizabeth, daughter of **Sir George Herbert** of Swansea, brother to **William, first earl of Pembroke of the Herbert line (second creation)**. He completed his formal education at Barnard's Inn where he was admitted in 1573 but soon afterwards he took up residence at his ancestral home at Henllys and became the most influential squire in north Pembrokeshire. He married (1), 1571, Elizabeth, daughter and co-heiress of **William Philipps** of Picton, by whom he had eleven children, the eldest son being Alban Owen (died 1658) who succeeded his father as lord of Cemais and sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1620 and 1643, and (2), Ancred, daughter of William Obiled, of Carmarthen, who bore him seven natural children, and five after marriage. Two of his natural sons by his second wife achieved a measure of fame - George Owen, 'York Herald' - see *D.N.B.* and Evan Owen (1599 - 1562), chancellor of S. Davids (1644 - 1662).

George Owen's life was much troubled by a succession of lawsuits with his enemies in the county, chief among whom were **Sir John Perrott** and William Warren of Tre-wern. He and his mother were involved in much litigation over their claims to manorial franchises in the lordship of Cemais. He took a prominent part in public affairs and served as sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1587 and 1602. As deputy vice-admiral for the counties of Pembroke and Cardigan, deputy-lieutenant, and justice of the peace over a number of years, he was active in the affairs of the militia and strove to persuade the authorities to fortify Milford Haven in face of the persistent fears of a Spanish invasion. He was one of the commissioners appointed by the crown to survey **Sir John Perrott's** property on the latter's attainder in 1592. He died 26 August 1613, and lies buried at Nevern.

George Owen, was deeply influenced by the great awakening of interest in history and antiquities which marked the age of Elizabeth in Wales as well as England. Not only was he a student of the work of **Humphrey Llwyd**, **David Powel**, **Sir John Price**, and their contemporaries in England, but he was on familiar terms with William Camden, whom he helped, **Lewys Dwnn**, **Thomas Jones** ('Twm Sion Cati'), and other antiquaries and genealogists of his day. He was the centre of a small group of writers in Pembrokeshire which included **George Owen Harry**, **Robert Holland**, and **George William Griffith**, and he gave his patronage and the hospitality of Henllys to many of the Welsh bards of the period. His most important work is ' *The Description of Penbrockshire* ' which appears to owe something of its design to Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* (1602). The ' *First Booke*,' a general history of the county, was completed on 18 May 1603; only a fragment of the ' *Second Booke* ' (published in *N.L.W. Jnl.*, v), a detailed history of the county parish by parish, has survived and it is doubtful whether Owen ever completed his ambitious scheme. He had already written ' *A Dialogue of the present Government of Wales* ' in 1594. Other works of his are ' *A Treatise of Lordships Marchers in Wales*,' ' *The Number of the Hundreds, Castells, Parish Churches and ffayres...in all the Shiers of Wales* ' (1602), which is commonly known as the ' *Description of Wales*,' a fragment called ' *A Cataloge and Genelogie of the Lordes of the Baronye of Kemes, Lordes of Kemes*,' ' *Prooffes that the Lordship of Kemes is a Lordshippe Marcher*' (in ' *Baronia de Kemeys* ' in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, supplement, 1862), ' *Pembrock and Kemes* ' (partly published), and several tracts on the barony of Cemais, ' *A Pamphlett conteigninge the description of Milford havon*,' ... 1595, and other writings on the same subject. There is a transcript of the ' *Treatise of Marie* ' (1599) in the ' *Vairdre Book* ' in N.L.W. (Bronwydd collection). He also compiled a commonplace book called ' *The Taylors Cussion* ' (ed. E. M. Prichard, 1906). A miscellaneous collection of his antiquarian notes and historical records of Cemais known as the ' *Vairdre Book* ' as well as the ' *Register Book of Kemes* ' (published in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, supplement, 1862) were made under his direction. Owen was an able and industrious genealogist and armorialist who came under the influence of the College of Arms, but most of his work in this field remains in manuscript (see *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1948, 378-82). He also produced a map (1602) of Pembrokeshire which Camden included in the sixth edition of the *Britannia* (1607).

Author

Dr Bertie George Charles, (1908 - 2000)

Sources

Owen, *A calendar of the public records relating to Pembrokeshire* (1911-18) (ed. Henry Owen in *Cymmrodorion Record Series*, i), where unless otherwise stated, all the works of George Owen named above are published

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

The National Library of Wales Journal, i, 226-7; ii, 43-5; v, 265-85

Cartae Baroniae de Kemes (Middle Hill Press 1841)

Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1862 (14-8,226-7), 1867 (132-5)

Bronwydd Manuscripts at the National Library of Wales

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [George Owen](#)

Works

Thomas Philipps, George Owen, *Pedigree of Wogan of Bouleston, Co. Pembroke (from George Owen's MSS, at Middle Hill, No. 12380, in 1860)*(Middle Hill Press c.1867)

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