

OWEN, Sir HUGH (1804 - 1881), educationist

Name: Hugh Owen
Date of birth: 1804
Date of death: 1881
Spouse: Ann Owen (née Wade)
Child: Hugh Owen
Parent: Mary Owen (née Jones)
Parent: Owen Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: educationist
Area of activity: Education
Author: Thomas Iorwerth Ellis

Born 14 January 1804, at y Foel, Llangeinwen, Anglesey (almost opposite Caernarvon), eldest son of Owen Owen and Mary his wife (daughter of Owen Jones). He was educated at the school kept by **Evan Richardson**, in that town, and after a short time at home went to London, in March 1825, where he served as a clerk till his appointment to a clerkship in the Poor Law Commission on 22 February 1836. In 1853 he became chief clerk, and retained this position when the work of the commission was transferred to the Local Government Board.

His chief work lay in the field of Welsh education. On 26 August 1843 he addressed a 'Letter to the Welsh People' on day-schools. In November 1843 he secured the appointment of an agent for the British and Foreign Schools Society in North Wales, and later in South Wales also. In August 1846 he became honorary secretary of the Cambrian Educational Society; and on 17 March 1847 he published another letter setting forward the advisability of British schools for Wales. In 1856 he was one of the chief supporters of the movement to establish the Normal College at Bangor, and later he was largely instrumental in securing a similar institution for women at Swansea. In 1879 he prepared a scheme for enabling North Wales boys from elementary schools to receive further education; the result of this was the foundation of the North Wales Scholarship Association, which did most valuable work till its dissolution in 1894.

But it is in connexion with the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth that Hugh Owen will be chiefly remembered. He first mooted the idea at a meeting in London in April 1854; in 1863, when a London committee was formed, he became one of the honorary secretaries. He took the lead in the negotiations which resulted in the election of **T. C. Edwards** as the first principal, and upon his retirement (which almost coincided with the opening of the college) devoted his time and energy to the promotion of the interests of the institution. He travelled all over Wales addressing meetings and made the welfare of the college a live issue to people throughout Wales and to Welsh communities elsewhere.

Owen had much to do with the appointment of a departmental committee in 1880 to enquire into 'the condition of intermediate and higher education in Wales and Monmouthshire,' and his evidence given before that committee shows clearly what he did for the college of Aberystwyth, and also his ideas for the development of intermediate education in Wales.

His further interests included the national eisteddfod and the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion; he was instrumental in ensuring reforms in both. He devoted time to the care of Welsh people in London, and in July 1873 took a leading part in founding the London Welsh Charitable Aid Society. He was knighted in August 1881, but died at Mentone, France, on 20 November, and was buried in Abney Park cemetery, London. He married Ann Wade, and his eldest son became Sir Hugh Owen, K.C.B., permanent secretary of the Local Government Board. There is a statue of Hugh Owen in Castle Square, Caernarvon.

Author

Thomas Iorwerth Ellis, (1899 - 1970)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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W. E. Davies, *Sir Hugh Owen his life and life-work being the essay to which the prize was offered at the National Eisteddfod 1884* (London 1885)

W. C. Davies and Jones, *The History of the University of Wales*

Aberdare Committee, 1881, Minutes of Evidence and Report

T. I. Ellis (ed.), *The Thomas Charles Edwards Letters* (Aberystwyth 1952)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Hugh Owen](#)

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