

OWEN, NICHOLAS (1752 - 1811), cleric and antiquary

Name: Nicholas Owen
Date of birth: 1752
Date of death: 1811
Parent: Margaret Owen (née Edwards)
Parent: Nicholas Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and antiquary
Area of activity: History and Culture; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 2 January 1752 at Llandyfydog, Anglesey, second son of Nicholas Owen (died 17 August 1785), a graduate (1740) of Jesus College, Oxford, rector of Llansadwrn 1747-50, and of Llandyfydog with Llanfihangel-tre'r-beirdd 1750-85. The family was of Pencraig, Llangefni; **J. E. Griffith** (*Pedigrees*, 51) gives a table, which can be augmented from Bangor MSS. 4602-7 at U.C.N.W. According to Nicholas the younger, there were fourteen children (letter of 1785 in Bangor MS. 2408), but Bangor MS. 4607 has only thirteen, and **Griffith** only twelve - he omits Richard, born 22 May 1754. This Richard graduated from Jesus College, Oxford, in 1778 (Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*), was licensed as curate to his father in 1777 (**A. Ivor Pryce**, *Diocese of Bangor during Three Centuries*, 115), and died 26 August 1780. In another place, however (*Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, 1931, 114), **Griffith** makes him curate of Penmynydd in 1780. But the Richard Owen who was curate of Penmynydd from 1782 (not 1780 - see **Pryce**, op. cit., 38) till 1791 was a totally different man. The matter has been dealt with thus fully because it is generally said (e.g. in the *D.N.B.*) that Nicholas junior succeeded his father at Llandyfydog, and the mistake has possibly arisen from confusing Nicholas with his brother Richard, who, though he died before his father, had indeed officiated at Llandyfydog. Of this large family, only Nicholas and his sister Mary were alive in October 1785; consumption (says he) had swept the rest away. But their mother, Margaret, daughter of Robert Edwards, rector of Llan-rug, was still living.

Nicholas Owen matriculated from Jesus College, Oxford, on 30 June 1769, and graduated in 1773 (Foster). His failure, in those easy days for a man of his attainments, to get a fellowship, may have been due to intractability. He was ordained in 1773, and got a curacy somewhere. In 1777 he published a volume of antiquarian miscellanea, *British Remains* (on which see *Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry*, 581). By 1779 he had moved to a curacy at Winslow (Buckinghamshire), where he published (1783) a sermon advocating Sunday schools; it must, however, be added that his opinion of these fluctuated, for in 1789 we find him writing to the bishop of London that the pupils tended to become 'sectaries or Methodists,' and that 'ignorant and enthusiastick clergy' misused the schools (Bangor MS. 2408 - in his answer, the bishop disagrees). Owen indeed was at all times severe towards uneducated clerics and 'sectaries,' whom he attacked in the press under the pseudonym 'Observer.' It would seem that he kept school (or took pupils) at Winslow, for in 1785 he published a school book, *Select Phrases from Horace*. At the end of 1788 his vicar died; Owen was disappointed of the living, and by October 1789 had moved to Bangor to live with his mother. He had for some time been bombarding patrons of livings (the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Bangor and of Chester, **lord Bulkeley**, etc.), and had tried for Llandyfydog (three times), Llanbeblig, Pentir, etc. - there are copies of the correspondence in Bangor MS. 2408; Owen's letters can hardly be called plaintive, for indeed he was ever insisting, scolding, and challenging, so much so that he had to make a public apology to the bishop of Bangor, and to endure a severe dressing-down from **Bulkeley**. At last, on 17 November 1790 (**Pryce**, op. cit., 42), the dean of Bangor made him perpetual curate of Llanfihangel Ysgeifiog and Llanffinan. In 1792 he published *Carnarvonshire, a Sketch of its History, etc.* On 30 October 1800 (**Pryce**, 46) he was given the rectory of Mellteyrn with Botwnnog but continued to live at Bangor (*Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry*, 582). He died, unmarried, 30 May 1811, and was buried at Llandyfydog. He is one of the several authors who have been credited with the authorship of the *History of the Island of Anglesea*, 1775 (see **John Thomas**, 1736 - 1769).

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

Sources cited

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