

OWEN family of Plas-du, Caernarfonshire

The surname Owen became fixed in this old Caernarvonshire stock (descended from Collwyn ap Tangno) with the children of OWEN AP GRUFFYDD and his wife Margaret, daughter of Foulk Salusbury of Llanrwst (and subsequently wife of Gruffydd Madryn), several of whom were closely associated with the Catholic revival following the excommunication of Elizabeth (1570).

THOMAS OWEN, the eldest son, was sheriff of Caernarvonshire in 1568-9,

but began absenting himself from Anglican worship c. 1573, and in 1576 was believed to be taking steps towards transferring the estate to his younger brother Foulk and joining his other brothers (below) abroad. Out of the suspicions thus aroused grew a series of official enquiries and lawsuits (1578 ff.) in which he was charged with recusancy, harbouring seminary priests, treasonable correspondence with his brother Hugh in Brussels and misappropriation in the latter's service of the Aberdaron tithes. After a term of imprisonment Owen seems to have conformed, and was probably dead by 1595, leaving the estate to his elder son OWEN THOMAS OWEN (died before 1618), who was squeezed out of it (c. 1614) by the pressure of creditors, e.g. Sir Thomas Myddelton (1550 - 1631) and Sir William Maurice. Thomas Owen's third son was JOHN OWEN (died 1622), the epigrammatist.

HUGH OWEN (1538 - 1618), Roman Catholic conspirator,

was a younger son of Owen ap Gruffydd, educated at Lincoln's Inn (21 April 1556), and employed in the household of Henry Fitzalan, 12th earl of Arundel and lord of Oswestry, whom he attended (in company with Humphrey Llwyd) to the Diet of Augsburg (1566) and by whom he was drawn into plots on behalf of Mary, Queen of Scots. Implication in the Ridolfi Plot drove him into hiding, first with the Loyd s of Llwyn-y-maen and other recusant families round Oswestry, then via Spain to Brussels (1572), where, as a Spanish pensioner, he advised the Netherlands government on English affairs for c. forty years, making frequent journeys to Italy, Spain, and France, maintaining a succession of secret agents in England, and using Welshmen in the English regiments in Flanders to further Spanish military plans there. He was denounced as instigator of many of the plots against Elizabeth and had certainly some share in Gunpowder Plot. Although not himself (as sometimes stated) a Jesuit, he was from 1587 an uncompromising champion of the Jesuit and Hispanophile wing of the Roman Catholics, as against Welsh fellow-exiles like Thomas Morgan (1543 - 1605) or Owen Lewis, bishop of Cassano, who favoured a Scottish succession to the English throne. Demands from 1574 by the English government for his extradition were consistently repulsed till 1610-11, when he retired to the English College at Rome, dying there on 30 May 1618. He kept in touch with Welsh affairs and frequently used Welsh in his secret correspondence. Dying a bachelor, he disinherited his Protestant nephew, John Owen the epigrammatist, in favour of his Catholic nephew Charles Gwynne, who commemorated him in the mural inscription at the English College quoted in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, 1853, 130-1.

ROBERT OWEN 1570), (fl. 1570), canon of Mantes,

was the 3rd son of Owen ap Gruffydd, and was probably also brought up in the household of the earl of Arundel, who presented him (1560) to the living of West Felton, Salop, which he forfeited or resigned in 1570, obtaining a licence to study abroad. He read law at Douai (1570-3), went on to Rome, and after at least one visit home settled in France with recommendations from the papal nuncio (1576). He lived in Paris in close touch with the British Catholic exiles there and elsewhere and in regular correspondence (in English and Welsh) with his brother Hugh. Early in the next century he became canon of Mantes (or possibly Le Mans). In December 1602, he was unofficially sent by the French government to Brussels to discuss with Hugh and the Hispanophiles James VI's claims to the English throne. He is last heard of (7 February 1604) bitterly inveighing against the results of the Stuart succession. A still younger brother, JOHN OWEN, also studied at Douai.

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