

OWEN, ROBERT (died 1685), Quaker

Name: Robert Owen
Date of death: 1685
Spouse: Jane Owen (née Vaughan)
Child: Robert Owen
Child: Griffith Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: Quaker
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

grandson of Robert Owen of Dolserau, Dolgelley, who was an attorney in the Court of the Marches at Ludlow and a son of 'baron' **Lewis Owen**. In the Civil War he sided with Parliament. He sat on the North Wales Composition Committee in August 1649, was a militia commissioner for Merioneth from May 1651, was appointed for his county (October 1653) by Barebone's Parliament on the only county committee it set up, and acted in the same capacity under the Protectorate, for the assessment of county taxes (June 1657). The statement that Owen was a Fifth Monarchy man is not sufficiently attested. The restored 'Rump' put him (July 1659) on the committee for 'ordering' the militia in North Wales; he took an active part in suppressing the Booth rebellion, and was thanked by the Council of State in October 1659; as late as January 1660 he was placed by the 'Rump' on the county committee for the assessment of taxes. American Quaker sources make him governor of Beaumaris immediately before the Restoration (adding that **John ap John**, was there with him). In April 1660, Owen, with some of his late fellow-commissioners, was arrested, and imprisoned in Caernarvon gaol. In the same year he joined the Friends (and Dolserau, on the testimony of **Rowland Ellis** of Bryn Mawr, was regularly used for Quaker meetings); and in 1661 he and others were committed to Dolgelley gaol for refusing the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, but were released after fifteen months on making a declaration of fidelity. In 1674 (following the collapse of the 1672 Indulgence), Owen was again imprisoned at Dolgelley, this time for five and a half years. He emigrated in 1684 to Pennsylvania, with his wife (and kinswoman) Jane, daughter of the antiquary **Robert Vaughan** of Hengwrt, and all their children, except Robert, the eldest. They reached Philadelphia 17 September 1684, but Owen and his wife died in a few months (not, as is sometimes said, in 1697); for their children and descendants, see **J. E. Griffith**, *Pedigrees*, 201.

Robert Owen had been very closely associated with the regicide **John Jones** (1597? - 1660). A letter to **Morgan Llwyd** from **John Jones** in 1651 (**NLW MS 11440D**, folio 43), partly printed in *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, ii, 291-2, hints that Owen was lacking in 'discretion and Christian prudence', and that his severity was apt to drive people into hypocritical support of the regime - and further, that it would be well if he rendered his accounts of public money voluntarily, to counter rumours that it was 'sticking to his fingers.'

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

Sources

'Public Record Office - State Papers' 28/251, Wales (Mer.), 24 May 1651

Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London 1911), ii, 267, 753, 1058, 1320, 1335

Calendar of the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents, etc., 1643-1660, i, 758

Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, Leybourne-Popham, 162

Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1659-60, 28

Swarthmore College Pa. records of Radnor Meeting, testimony of John Humphrey to Robert Owen, 1683

N.L.W. *Llanfair and Brynnodol MSS. at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth*, bundle 94, militia minutes 25 April 1660 and warrant 28 April

Besse, *A collection of the sufferings of the people called Quakers for the testimony of a good conscience from the time of their being first distinguished by that name in the year 1650 to the time of the act commonly called the Act of toleration granted to Protestant dissenters in the first year of the reign of King William the Third and Queen Mary in the year 1689* (1753), i, 746

Browning, *Welsh settlement of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia 1912), 28

A. H. Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales* (Cardiff 1952), 113-4, 152, 160, 163, 174 - but correct the mis-statement (p. 114) that Owen was one of the Propagation Commissioners

Richard Jones, *Crynwyr Bore Cymru 1653-1699* (Abermaw 1931), 81, 129 (based on T. A. Glenn's research)

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