

OWEN, WILLIAM ('William Owen of Prysgol,' 1813 - 1893), musician

Name: William Owen
Pseudonym: William Owen
Date of birth: 1813
Date of death: 1893
Parent: Ellen Owen
Parent: William Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Home: Prysgol
Area of activity: Music; Religion
Author: Robert David Griffith

Born 12? December 1813 in Lônpopty, Bangor, the son of William and Ellen Owen. The father was a quarryman at Cae Braich-y-cafn quarry, Bethesda, and the son began to work in the same quarry when he was ten years old.

He learnt music at classes held by Robert Williams (Cae Aseth), at Carneddi, and from **William Roberts**, Tyn-y-maes, the composer of the hymn-tune ' Andalusia.' He wrote his first hymn-tune when he was 18 - it was published in *Y Drysorfa* for June 1841. After the family had [removed] to [Cae-sguborwen], Bangor, [sometimes called Cilmelyn] - they had spent some years [at Tŷ-hen] near the quarry - William Owen formed a temperance choir which sang ' Cwypm Babilon,' the work of the conductor, at the Caernarvon temperance festival, 1849. In 1852, with the help of some friends at Bethesda, he published *Y Perl Cerddorol yn cynnwys tonau ac anthemau, cysegredig a moesol*; of this 3,000 copies were sold, A sol-fa edition appeared in 1886 of which 4,000 copies were sold. He composed several temperance pieces, some of which were sung in the Eryri temperance festivals held at Caernarvon castle. His anthem, ' Ffynnon Ddisglair,' and the hymn-tunes ' Alma ' and ' Deemster ' became popular, but it was the hymn-tune called ' Bryn Calfaria ' which made the composer famous; this continues to have a considerable vogue in Wales and in England.

He married the daughter of the house called Prysgol and went there to live; he also became precentor at Caeathro C.M. chapel. He died 20 July 1893, and was buried in Caeathro chapel burial ground.

Author

Robert David Griffith, (1877 - 1958)

Sources

M. O. Jones, *Bywgraffiaeth Cerddorion Cymreig* (1890)

Y Cerddor, September 1893

R. D. Griffith, *Hanes canu cynulleidfaol Cymru* (Cardiff 1948)

Y Clorianydd, 24 March 1954

Additional Links

NLW Archives: William Owen, Prysgol, Papers

NLW Archives: NLW MS 12052C: 'Bryn Calfaria'

Wikidata: Q28361196

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