

ROBERTS, OWEN OWEN (1793 - 1866), physician and social reformer

Name: Owen Owen Roberts
Date of birth: 1793
Date of death: 1866
Parent: Mary Roberts
Parent: William Lloyd Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: physician and social reformer
Area of activity: Medicine; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Emyr Hywel Owen

Born 17 January 1793, son of William Lloyd and Mary Roberts of Cefn-y-coed, in the parish of Eglwys-bach, Denbighshire. He was educated at Llanrwst grammar school and in the medical schools of Edinburgh and Dublin. He worked as a medical officer at the Royal Hospital, Chester, and in the Llanrwst, Caernarvon, and Bangor districts. He was particularly interested in public health and made a special study of cholera when this disease swept over Wales in 1830. He established a health board at Caernarvon and when the epidemic broke out afresh in 1848, published a pamphlet, *A Few Plain, Practical Hints on Cholera, its Causes, Prevention, and Treatment*. He was the originator of the movement to set up the first hospital for Caernarvonshire and Anglesey at Bangor in 1844, and it was he, too, who first thought of a home for mental defectives at Denbigh. O. O. Roberts also took a lively interest in education, and especially in the educational endowments of the dioceses of Bangor and S. Asaph. These had nearly all been misappropriated and he drew Parliament's attention to this and, especially, to the state of Llanrwst grammar school and Friars school, Bangor; and when the education commissioners arrived in Wales in 1846 he sent them a long letter asking them to put things right. O. O. Roberts was also one of the most prominent Radicals of the first half of the 19th century. Before 1832 he had sought to get Members of Parliament to give expression to the wishes of their constituents rather than to their own personal views, and after 1832 he left no stone unturned to ensure that every one who had a right to the vote was duly registered. He was a prominent supporter of the Radical candidate in every parliamentary election in Caernarvonshire, and in 1852 he supported **Richard Davies** (1818 - 1896) of Menai Bridge in the Caernarvon boroughs constituency as 'a man from the ranks of the long-maligned common people of Wales.' It was not long before it became clear to him that the 'screw' was being applied to the voters and that, if this was to be overcome, the ballot was necessary. He was also one of the outstanding protagonists in the great dispute of the century between church and chapel, publishing six pamphlets dealing with the subject; in these he mercilessly castigated the state of the Established Church, and in 1837 succeeded in inducing the inhabitants of the parish of Llanbeblig (i.e. Caernarvon) to refuse payment of the 'church rate.' He had other interests as well - farming the land, town development, the proper use of Crown lands, and the improvement of harbours. In addition, he was a popular physician. He died 31 January 1866, and was buried in Glanadda cemetery, Bangor.

Author

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Sources

Personal research

Additional Links

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