

PUGHE, ELIZABETH ('Eliza') (1826 - 1847), deaf illustrator

Name: Elizabeth ('eliza') Pughe
Date of birth: 1826
Date of death: 1847
Parent: Elizabeth Pughe
Parent: David Roberts Pughe
Gender: Female
Occupation: deaf illustrator
Area of activity: Art and Architecture; Education; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Gareth Richard Foulkes

Eliza Pughe was born in 1826 at Chwaen Wen, Tref Alaw, Anglesey, the youngest of three children of David Roberts Pughe and his wife Elizabeth. Chwaen Wen was the home of her maternal grandparents. The family moved to Coch-y-Bug, Pontllyfni near Clynnog around 1828.

Eliza's eldest brother was **John Pughe (1814-1874)**, a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and known in Welsh literary circles as the translator of *Meddygon Myddfai* ('The Physicians of Myddfai'). He was a friend of the teacher and poet **Ebenezer Thomas (Eben Fardd)**. Eliza's other brother, **David William Pughe (1821-1862)**, was a poet and antiquarian as well as being an accomplished surgeon.

According to a biographical note in her pictorial bilingual English/Welsh dictionary, Eliza Pughe lived from 1831 to 1850 (sic) in Coch y Big (sic). The author of the note was Eliza's niece, the artist Buddug Anwylini Pughe (1856-1939), and she describes Eliza as being 'deaf and dumb from birth, and was a very pretty girl'.

Eliza's pictorial dictionary (now in the National Library of Wales) contains hundreds of minute hand-drawn illustrations accompanied by English and Welsh nouns or verbs to describe each image. It is highly likely that the illustrations are by Eliza herself, and they reveal that she was a talented child artist with a good eye for detail. Her dictionary presents clear evidence of her family's attempts to home-educate Eliza as it was written and illustrated fifty to sixty years before the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 that made schooling for deaf children between the ages of five- and eleven-years compulsory.

Eliza's illustrations provide us with a fascinating insight into domestic middle-class life in Caernarfonshire in the 1830s and 40s, including images of period costume, cooking utensils, tools used around the home, items of furniture, animals, insects, and rural life as well as pictures of forceps, eye probes and a trephine, the tools of her brothers' trade. Some of the images are richly coloured - a soldier's scarlet coat with black high collar and golden epaulette. There is humour too; a deaf man with an ear trumpet waves to another man with a big gaping mouth and a blind man loses his hat after a collision with an overhanging branch from a tree. Some pictures are incomplete but hint at the social unrest of the time; a group of farmers disguised as women riot at a tollgate. Underneath it says that they are the daughters of Rebecca.

According to Buddug Anwylini Pughe's note the book's binding is the work of Eben Fardd. In addition to its value for Welsh social history, the dictionary is a significant part of the legacy of deaf history.

Eliza Pughe died at the age of twenty-one on 7 December 1847 at Brondirion, Clynnog Fawr. Brondirion is where her brother David ran his surgery. The cause of death on her certificate is given as 'inflammation of the lungs'. She was buried in the family grave in the cemetery of St Beuno's Church, Clynnog Fawr. Years later her father was buried in the same grave.

The englyn to Eliza that is inscribed on her gravestone was composed by Eben Fardd:

Geneth ddoniol, gain, a thyner - edwodd,
Yn adeg ei gwychder;
O dwrf byd, y wryf ber,
Esgynnodd i lys gwiwner.

(A talented, delicate, gentle girl,
She faded at the height of her splendour.
From the din of the world the pure sweet maid
Ascended to the court of the loving Lord.)

Author

Gareth Richard Foulkes

Sources

J. H. Cule, 'John Pughe, 1814-1874. A scholar surgeon's operation on the imperforate anus', *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons*, 37:4 (Oct 1965), 247-57

Eben Fardd, *Cyff Beuno, sef awdl ar adgyweiriad eglwys Clynnog Fawr. Yng nghyd a nodiadau hynafol, achyddiaeth, daiaregaeth y plwyf, rhestr o'r beirdd a'r llenorion; at yr hyn y chwanegwyd nodion a hynodion y bardd gan Ioan ab Hu Feddyg* (Tremadog 1863)

G. R. Foulkes, 'Deaf Lives: Eliza Pughe', *Deaf History Journal*, 14:2 (2011)

M. Pritchard, *Y Casglwr pob peth printiedig*, rhif 43 (1991)

Eliza Pughe, *Pictorial dictionary* [graphic]

Works

Eliza Pughe, *Pictorial dictionary* [graphic]

Additional Links

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