

OWEN, JOHN DYFNALLT ('Dyfnallt'; 1873 - 1956), minister (Congl.), poet, writer, journalist and Archdruid of Wales

Name: John Dyfnallt Owen
Pseudonym: Dyfnallt
Date of birth: 1873
Date of death: 1956
Spouse: Annie Owen (née Hopkin)
Parent: Angharad Owen
Parent: Daniel Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister (Congl.), poet, writer, journalist and Archdruid of Wales
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Poetry; Religion
Author: Geraint Elfyn Jones

Born 7 April 1873 at Coedffalde, Llan-giwg, Glamorganshire, at the foot of the Black Mountain, son of Daniel and Angharad Owen. His mother died when he was a year old and he was brought up by his paternal grandparents. He went to Cwmllynfell school and after a short period working in the mines he entered Parcyfelfed Academy (the Old College School), Carmarthen, and went to Bala-Bangor College in 1894. He was a close friend of **Ben Bowen** and other young poets. His interest in the *eisteddfod* persisted throughout his ministry in Trawsfynydd (1898-1902) where he was an influence on **Ellis Humphrey Evans** ('Hedd Wyn'); and Deiniolen (1902-05) where he became acquainted with **Thomas Gwynn Jones** and **William John Gruffydd**. He then moved to be minister of Sardis, Pontypridd (1905-10) and while he was there he won the crown at Swansea national eisteddfod in 1907 on 'Y Greal Sanctaidd', having been very close to winning at Rhyl in 1904. He married, 11 August 1904, Annie Hopkin of Ystalyfera and they had two children. In 1908 Dyfnallt became a member of the Celtic Congress and maintained an interest in the Celtic countries thereafter. In 1910 he received a call to Llammas Street, Carmarthen where he remained until he retired from the ministry. In 1916 he went to Béthune in France as chaplain to the Y.M.C.A., and published *Myfyron a chaneuon maes y tân*, an unique booklet of poems and meditations on his experiences on the battlefield. He wrote poetry only occasionally afterwards although he published a collection of poems, *Y Greal a cherddi eraill* (1946). He turned his attention to writing and to researching the history of independent causes. **Stephen Hughes** (1912), '**Tomos Glyn Cothi**' (Thomas Evans, 1764 - 1833) (*Y Dysgedydd*, 1933) and 'Y Tri Brawd o Lanbryn-mair' (*Adroddiad Undeb yr Annibynwyr*, 1928) were some of his heroes, and he wrote about them not so much to record events as to inspire a new generation. In 1927 he was appointed editor of *Y Tyst*, a position he enjoyed as a means of expressing his views on peace, anti-imperialism, nationalism and Christianity. In 1953, to celebrate his silver jubilee as editor, a collection of his essays was published in *Ar y twr*, a suggestive title conveying the editor as Isaiah's watchman guarding the city from the enemy, which is how he saw himself. He travelled widely in Poland, Italy, Switzerland, Bavaria and Brittany. He published a book on his visit to Brittany, *O ben tir Llydaw* (1934) two collections of essays and articles, *Min yr hwyr* (1934) and *Rhamant a rhyddid* (1952), and also contributed numerous articles to the denominational press and *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. When World War II broke out he was in Danzig, and he published articles such as 'Wythnos yn Danzig', 'Arswyd y Gestapo' and 'Hitleriaeth gartref'. After the war he gave refuge in his home in Carmarthen to Roparz Hemon the Breton writer who had escaped before his trial in Brittany. Dyfnallt was president of the Union of Welsh Independents in 1936 and received an hon. M.A. degree of the University of Wales in 1953. He was elected Archdruid of Wales at Rhyl in 1954. He was then eighty years old and had been enjoying his retirement in Aberystwyth since 1947. He died 28 December 1956, and his ashes were scattered on the Black Mountain. There was no flattery in the tribute given him in *Y Cymro* - 'one of the best loved of the Welsh'.

Author

Geraint Elfyn Jones

Sources

Geraint Elfyn Jones, *Bywyd a gwaith John Dyfnallt Owen* (Swansea 1976)

Emrys Jones in Derec Llwyd Morgan, *Adnabod deg. Portreadau o ddeg o arweinwyr cynnar y Blaid Genedlaethol* (Denbigh 1977)

Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society, 11, 120-8, for his bibliography

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Dyfnallt Owen](#)

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