

OWEN, ROBERT (BOB OWEN, Croesor; 1885 - 1962), historian, bookworm and genealogist

Name: Robert Owen
Date of birth: 1885
Date of death: 1962
Spouse: Nell Owen (née Jones)
Parent: Jane Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian, bookworm and genealogist
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing
Author: Dyfed Oswald Evans

Born at Pen-y-parc (Twillwenci, colloquially), Llanfrothen, Merionethshire, 8 May 1885 [the son of Jane Owen, according to [NLW MS 19295B](#)] and brought up by his grandmother, Ann Owen, daughter of a weaver of Aberffraw, Anglesey. He left Llanfrothen elementary school at the age of 13 to work on the home-farm of Brondanw mansion. He worked for three years on farms in the district before being appointed a clerk in Park and Croesor quarry. He remained there for 30 years until 30 January 1931 when the quarry was closed because of the depression in the slate industry. After being unemployed for two and a half years he was appointed Workers Educational Association organiser for Caernarfonshire Rural District Council and later a W.E.A. lecturer.

Mixing with knowledgeable and cultured men in the quarry office proved the main educational influence on him and it was there that he developed an obsession with research. He collected an enormous library which spread to almost every corner of his home. He became well-known, particularly for his weekly column in *Y Genedl Gymreig*, 'Lloffion Bob Owen', 1929-37. He contributed to many newspapers and to about twenty different periodicals. His voluminous essays won prizes at the National Eisteddfod including one of about eight hundred foolscap pages in small handwriting or close type on emigration from Wales to the United States of America between 1760 and 1860, and one on the defunct industries of the Dwyryd and Glaslyn area, which was published in 1943.

Scholars considered him to be a serious researcher, an important genealogist and an authority on the history of the Welsh in America. He received an hon. M.A. degree of the University of Wales (the youngest ever at the age of 47) and later the O.B.E. for his contribution to the history and literature of Wales.

In June 1923 he married Nell Jones from Caeathro, and they made their home in Ael-y-bryn, Croesor. They had two daughters and a son. He was a very popular lecturer with Welsh societies in all parts of Wales and in England. Because of his interest in people and their roots he tended to start hares and to follow their trail as he lectured. He was also accused of being an iconoclast because of his comments on well-known persons like Mary Jones of Bala and [John Elias](#) of Anglesey. For his part, he contended that he created far more idols than he destroyed.

He was a colourful and marvellously fiery personality, a torrent of life, and as a consequence of his various eccentricities he became a legendary character in his own lifetime. He died 30 April 1962 and was buried in Llanfrothen New Cemetery.

Author

Dyfed Oswald Evans

Sources

Dyfed Evans, *Bywyd Bob Owen* (1977)

Robin Williams, *Y Tri Bob* (Llandysul 1970)

NLW Archives: [NLW MS 19295B](#)

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [Papurau Bob Owen, Croesor](#)

Wikidata: [Q28360717](#)

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