
OWEN, ANEURIN (1792 - 1851), Welsh historical scholar and editor of the Laws of Hywel Dda

Name: Aneurin Owen

Date of birth: 1792

Date of death: 1851

Spouse: Jane Owen (née Lloyd)

Parent: Sarah Elizabeth Pughe (née Harper)

Parent: William Owen Pughe

Gender: Male

Occupation: Welsh historical scholar and editor of the Laws of Hywel Dda

Area of activity: History and Culture; Law; Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing; Scholarship and Languages

Author: William Llewelyn Davies

Born 23 July 1792 in London, son of [William Owen Pughe](#) by his wife (Sarah) Elizabeth. The family moved, whilst Aneurin Owen was still a child of about 8, to the parish of Nantglyn, Denbighshire, where the father had recently been left a small estate (together with property in Merioneth) by a relative, the Rev. Rice Pughe.

Though Aneurin Owen was sent to Friars School, Bangor, he received most of his education at the hands of his father, who was anxious that his son should be interested in the Welsh historical and literary studies for which he, the father, was already well-known.

Aneurin Owen made his home, on reaching manhood, at Tan-y-gyrt, Nantglyn. He married, 1820, Jane Lloyd, also of Nantglyn. He became one of the assistant Tithe commissioners for England and Wales, afterwards becoming an assistant Poor Law commissioner, and, a little later, an Enclosure commissioner.

On the death of [John Humffreys Parry](#) in 1825 Owen was entrusted with the task which the former had begun, that of preparing an edition of the Laws of [Hywel Dda](#) and the collection of material for an edition of ' Brut y Tywysogion.' The Laws appeared in 1841 under the title of *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales; Comprising the Laws ... by Howel the Good and Anomalous Laws ... with an English Translation* (London, for the commissioners on Public Records, 1841, two vols.). As [Sir John E. Lloyd](#), the writer of the account of Owen in the *D.N.B.*, points out, the work was remarkable not only for the care and accuracy with which the manuscripts were reproduced but also as distinguishing for the first time the three versions - Venedotian, Dimetian, and Gwentian - of the original law of [Hywel](#). *Brut y Tywysogion* did not appear until 1860, i.e. nine years after the death of Owen, and then only as the result of complaints made (see *Archæologia Cambrensis*, III, v, 235) that the materials left by the editor were carelessly kept in the Public Record Office and access to them given to persons who were using them without making the expected acknowledgement; when the *Brut* eventually appeared, under the editorship of [John Williams](#) (ab Ithel), it was found that no indication was given that Owen had done the greater part of the work. Three years before the death of Owen there had appeared, in the ' Monumenta Historica Britannica ' series, that part of the *Brut*

which ends with the year 1066; this had been edited by Owen. The Cambrian Archaeological Association published, in 1863, Owen's transcript and translation of the so-called 'Gwentian' Brut, together with the introduction which he had prepared for the ' Monumenta.'

In connection with the preparation for the works mentioned above Owen had, naturally, visited several libraries; he was also, as the son of [William Owen Pughe](#), interested in the literary content of such manuscripts as he saw. His achievements have been compared, in some respects, with those of [Edward Lhuyd](#); like the latter he published a list of manuscripts of Welsh interest which he had seen in North Wales, the list appearing as ' Catalogue of Welsh Manuscripts, etc., in North Wales ' in vol. ii, part iv, of the *Transactions of the Cymmrodorion or Metropolitan Cambrian Institution* (London, 1843); the list had been awarded the prize at the Cymmrodorion Society's eisteddfod held at Welshpool, 8 September 1824. The second prize for a list of manuscripts in North Wales was awarded to [Angharad Llwyd](#); her list had been printed in 1828 in vol. ii of the *Transactions*; for a letter from Owen to [Angharad Llwyd](#), written 19 January 1831, about a manuscript of [Guto'r Glyn](#), see N.L.W. MS. 4857.

Owen showed great interest in Welsh movements of his time, particularly in the eisteddfodau. He was one of five appointed at the Abergavenny eisteddfod of 1838 to consider the question of the reform of Welsh orthography; he had, in 1832, won the silver medal at the Beaumaris eisteddfod for an essay on Agriculture (published in the Transactions of that eisteddfod, 1839, and also separately as *Traethawd Gwobrwyol ... ar Amaethyddiaeth* (London, 1839).

He died 17 July 1851 at Tros-y-parc, near Denbigh.

Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Handlist of Manuscripts in the National Library of Wales, i (Introduction, xxii, describes A. Owen's catalogues of the Hengwrt MSS.)

NLW MSS 424, 1804, 1893, 1899, 13263

Album of sketches by William Owen Pughe in *Mysevin Manuscript in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth* 30 in N.L.W.

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Aneurin Owen](#)

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Published date: 1959

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