

## EDWARDS, Sir IFAN ab OWEN (1895 - 1970) lecturer, founder of Urdd Gobaith Cymru

**Name:** Ifan ab Owen Edwards  
**Date of birth:** 1895  
**Date of death:** 1970  
**Spouse:** Eirys Mary Lloyd Edwards (née Phillips)  
**Child:** Ifan Prys Edwards  
**Child:** Owen Edwards  
**Parent:** Ellen Elizabeth Edwards (née Davies)  
**Parent:** Owen Morgan Edwards  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** lecturer, founder of Urdd Gobaith Cymru  
**Area of activity:** Education; Eisteddfod; History and Culture; Literature and Writing  
**Author:** Mary Auronwy James

Son of [Sir O.M. Edwards](#) and Ellen his wife and born 25 July 1895 in Tremaran, Llanuwchllyn, Merionethshire, though he was brought up in Oxford until the family returned to Llanuwchllyn in 1907. He went to Bala grammar school and University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (1912-15). After serving as a soldier in France (1915-18) he entered Lincoln College, Oxford (1918-20) and graduated in history. In the meantime his parents died, and his father's last wish that Wales should be given better educational opportunities directed his steps thereafter. He returned to Wales as a teacher at Dolgellau grammar school 1920 and then as a part-time tutor in the Extra-mural Department, U.C.W., Aberystwyth in 1921, lecturer in the Education Department in 1933 and as director of extra-mural studies in 1946. He retired 2 yrs later so as to devote his whole attention to Urdd Gobaith Cymru.

After his father's death he felt compelled to continue his father's work. He edited *Cymru* (1920-27) and *Cymru'r Plant* (1920-50), with *Cronicl yr Urdd* as an appendix (1928-33), as well as inaugurating the magazine *Y Capten* (1931-32) for young people. It was his letter in the January 1922 issue of *Cymru'r Plant* that led to the founding of Urdd Gobaith Cymru. He was a man of vision, but also a realist; he was a leader who had the gift of winning over all kinds of people to support and sponsor his progressive and ambitious plans, being always one step ahead of his age. He held the first Urdd recreational camp in Llanuwchllyn in 1928; later more permanent sites were obtained at Llangrannog (1932) and Glanllyn (1950). He initiated the Urdd annual eisteddfod in 1929; athletic meetings in 1932; pleasure cruises in 1933; a camp for those learning the Welsh language and a football league to play for the Urdd cup in 1941; an international camp in 1948 and a Celtic camp in 1949. That year Pantyfedwen, Borth, Cardiganshire, was opened as a residential centre and thousands of young people and adults attended many kinds of interesting courses there. He accepted modern technology and used it as best he could for the benefit of Wales. He took photographs of Urdd activities and showed them on his 'magic lantern' in villages throughout Wales during the winter; in conjunction with [J. Ellis Williams](#) he made the first (partially successful) Welsh sound film, *The Quarryman*, for a travelling cinema; and he became a director of Television Wales and the West, enabling him to persuade members of the board to become more favourably inclined towards the Welsh language. It was through his endeavours that the Welsh school was opened at Aberystwyth in 1939. Despite all criticism he considered this to be the most 'successful and valuable' project with which he had ever been associated. In addition to the magazines already named, he edited *A catalogue of Star Chamber proceedings relating to Wales* (1929), which gives some indication of the field - Welsh history - in which he would have desired to work had he not vowed to serve the Urdd to the best of his ability. He was co-author (with [E. Tegla Davies](#)) of *Llyfr y bobl bach* (1924), a book for young children; author of *Yr Urdd 1922-43* (1943); a short autobiography *Clych atgof* (1961); a number of articles including 'The Welsh language, its modern history and its present-day problems' in *Hesperia*, 1951, 39-57. He gave notable service to numerous public institutions in Wales and London. He was a J.P. (1941-58); and he worked hard for the Parliament for Wales Campaign in the early 1950s. In 1947 he received a knighthood; Urdd Gobaith Cymru presented him with his portrait by Alfred Janes in 1956; he received the Cymmrodorion gold medal in 1956; and an honorary LL.D. degree of the University of Wales in 1959.

He married, 18 July 1923, Eirys Mary Lloyd Phillips, Liverpool, and resided at Neuadd Wen, Llanuwchllyn until 1930, and thereafter at Aberystwyth. They had two sons, Owen and Prys. He died at his home, Bryneithin, 23 January 1970, and was buried at Llanuwchllyn.

### Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

### Sources

Norah Isaac, *Ifan ab Owen Edwards, 1895-1970* (Cardiff 1972)

*Cofio Syr Ifan. Teyrngedau i Syr Ifan ab Owen Edwards, 1895-1970, sylfaenydd Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (Aberystwyth 1970)

see Glyn Lewis Jones, *Llyfryddiaeth Ceredigion, 1600-1964* (Aberystwyth 1967), and *A Bibliography of Cardiganshire & 1964-1968 Supplement* (Aberystwyth 1970) for his bibliography

## Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: Ifan ab Owen Edwards

## Additional Links

VIAF: 101044203

Wikidata: Q3399427

**Published date:** 2001

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### APA Citation



James, M. A., (2001). EDWARDS, Sir IFAN ab OWEN (1895 - 1970) lecturer, founder of Urdd Gobaith Cymru. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 9 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s2-EDWA-OWE-1895>

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