

# OWEN, OWEN JOHN (' John Owen y Fenni '; 1867 - 1960), printer and publisher, choir conductor and eisteddfod compère

**Name:** Owen John Owen  
**Date of birth:** 1867  
**Date of death:** 1960  
**Spouse:** Mabel Annie Owen (née Dawson)  
**Parent:** Margaret Owain (née Vaughan)  
**Parent:** Dafydd Owain  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** printer and publisher, choir conductor and eisteddfod compère  
**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Music; Printing and Publishing  
**Author:** Siân Rhiannon Williams

Born 1867 at Dolgellau, son of Dafydd Owain, compositor and reader in the office of *Y Dysgedydd* and *Y Dydd*, and Margaret (née Vaughan). He served his apprenticeship in the same office before moving to Abergavenny in 1887 to work as a Welsh compositor in Henry Sergeant's press. He took an interest in music, having learnt the rudiments of sol-fa in the Sunday school in Yr Hen Gapel, Dolgellau, where his father was the secretary. At Abergavenny he was a member of the Independent church, Castle St., where he became deacon and precentor. In 1897 he and his brother, Edwin Vaughan Owen (died 22 October 1950), bought the Minerva Press, and their office in Neville St. became a meeting place for members of the local Welsh-speaking community. Among the Welsh books published by the Owen Brothers is their father's biography (1907) and the works of [Eluned Morgan](#): *Dringo'r Andes* (1904), *Gwymon y môr* (1909), *Ar dir a môr* (1913).

On 9 October 1909 John Owen married Mabel Annie Dawson, and by that time he was well-known as a choir conductor, an elocutionist, witty public speaker and compère at eisteddfodau. He refused an offer to be a compère at the national eisteddfod in Abergavenny in 1913, but he regularly compered from the national eisteddfod platform afterwards (1920-37), and he was made a member of the Gorsedd of Bards. He was energetic, and his multifarious interests included astronomy, cycling, motoring, climbing mountains, painting, local history and playing the harp and he gave over fifty years service as a lay preacher. He received the freedom of the town of Abergavenny in 1949, and O.B.E. a year later. When he died 30 December 1960 a tribute was paid to him as the ' Patron saint of Gwent '.

## Author

Dr Siân Rhiannon Williams

## Sources

*Who's who in Wales*, (1937)

personal research

## Additional Links

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