

OWEN, WILLIAM ('Gwilym Meudwy ', or ' Gwilym Glan Llŵchwr '; 1841 - 1902), rhymester and tramp

Name: William Owen
Pseudonym: Gwilym Meudwy, Gwilym Glan Llŵchwr
Date of birth: 1841
Date of death: 1902
Parent: Sarah Owen
Parent: William Owen
Gender: Male
Occupation: rhymester and tramp
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Huw Walters

Born in Aber Cefi, Llandybïe, Carmarthenshire, 23 July 1841, son of William and Sarah Owen. The family hailed from Montgomeryshire and the father was a weaver in Cil-y-cwm, Llanwrda and Llandovery before moving to a woollen factory in Cwmllechwr in 1836. According to [Walcyn Wyn](#) (*Y Dwygwr*, 1902, 262) William Owen was the great-grandson of [John Owen](#) (1757 - 1829), Machynlleth, author of the long poem *Troedigaeth Atheos*. Gwilym Meudwy was apprenticed to a carpenter in Trap, near Llandeilo, in 1856 but he returned to his father and the woollen mill after 3 years. His father died in 1865 and his mother in 1877, and Gwilym Meudwy was a tramp for the rest of his life. He spent his summers at the spas in Llanwrtyd and Llandrindod, returning to Brynaman, Llanelli and Swansea over the winter. He used to sell the products of his muse on these annual pilgrimages and he kept the printers of Aberdare, Llandeilo, Ystalyfera, Llanelli and Ammanford busy for a period of 30 years. Between 1879 and 1902 he published about 18 pamphlets containing a variety of material such as temperance debates, conversations, ballads and tracts, but he made his name primarily as an elegist. He composed scores of memorial verses for leading Nonconformists and politicians as well as ballads in memory of those killed in colliery accidents. The quality of these verses is, to say the least, mediocre, but Gwilym Meudwy deserves recognition as one of the last of his kind to make a living by selling his poems and ballads. He died in Ammanford 21 June 1902 and was buried in the family grave in the cemetery of the parish church, Llandybïe. One of his brothers was Joseph Pugh Owen, schoolmaster of Torrington Square, London; another was John Owen who married a sister of D. Avan Griffiths, minister of Troedrhiwdalar (Congl.). William Pugh Owen, a priest in Melbourne, Australia, and Dr. John Griffith Owen, a doctor in Kingston-upon-Thames, were the children of that marriage. Edmund Owen Rees of San Francisco, British Consul in Nicaragua, was the rhymester's nephew, his sister's son.

Author

Dr Huw Walters

Sources

Y Casglwr pob peth printiedig, 8 August 1979 (with a list of his works)

G. M. Roberts, *Hanes Plwyf Llandybïe, etc* (Cardiff 1939), 235

South Wales Guardian, 21 August - 11 September 1975

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