

OWEN family of Orielton, Pembrokeshire

The Owen of Orielton family played a prominent part in the history of Pembrokeshire for nearly three centuries. The estate of Orielton in Castlemartin came into the possession of the Owen family by the marriage of HUGH ab OWEN to Elizabeth Wirriot in 1571.

Hugh Owen (he dropped the 'ab') was the eldest son of **Owen ap Hugh of Bodowen (or Bodeon), Anglesey**, who claimed to be a descendant of Hwfa ap Cynddelw, said to have been steward to **Owain Gwynedd**; Elizabeth Wirriot was the daughter and sole heiress of George Wirriot and his wife Jane, daughter of **John Philipps of Picton castle**. (The Wirriot family had been settled in Pembrokeshire since the 12th century; **Giraldus Gambrensis** mentions a Stephen of that name. A David Wirriot of the barony of Pembroke was one of the twelve jurors for the subsidy of 1292). **Hugh Owen** was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn and joined the Carmarthen circuit of the Great Sessions. In 1574 he was appointed recorder of Carmarthen. He served as sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1583 and of Anglesey in 1608, and was knighted. **Sir Hugh Owen** divided his estates, giving his Pembrokeshire property to his eldest son, JOHN OWEN, and his Anglesey property to his second son, WILLIAM OWEN.

John Owen married Dorothy, daughter of Rowland Laugharne of S. Brides, and Lettice, daughter of **Sir John Perrot** of Haroldston, Haverfordwest. He died in 1612, two years before his father.

Sir Hugh Owen was, therefore, succeeded by his grandson, also named HUGH OWEN, who was born in 1604. He represented Pembroke borough in the Parliaments of 1625-6 and 1627-8, and Haverfordwest borough in the Short Parliament of 1640 and again Pembroke borough in the Long Parliament of that year. He was sheriff in the years 1634 and 1654 and was created a baronet in 1641. During the Civil War he was an opportunist. At the outset he favoured the Parliament and supported his cousin **Rowland Laugharne** and **John Poyer** at Pembroke. He was a prisoner in the hands of **Sir Henry Vaughan**, when he evacuated Haverfordwest after the Royalist defeat at Pill (on Milford Haven) in February 1644. Later he is said to have resorted to the king at Oxford and to have abandoned Pembrokeshire for Anglesey. In 1648 he is alleged to have countenanced the resistance of **Poyer** and **Laugharne** at Pembroke; but he appears to have made his peace with the victorious party and, as has been mentioned, he served as sheriff under the Protectorate. Sir Hugh married (1) Frances, daughter of **Sir John Philipps, the 1st baronet of Picton castle**, and (2) Catherine, daughter of Sir Evan Lloyd of Yale, Denbighshire.

He was succeeded by his son, Sir HUGH OWEN, 2nd baronet, in 1670, who by his marriage to his kinswoman, Anne, heiress of **Hugh Owen of Bodeon**, again united the Pembrokeshire and Anglesey estates. He was sheriff of Anglesey in 1688 and represented Pembroke county in the Parliaments of 1678-9, 1679, 1688-9, and 1689-90. He died at Bristol in January 1698/9 and was buried in S. Augustine's church where there is a memorial to him.

His son, the 3rd baronet, Sir ARTHUR OWEN, married Emma, daughter of **Sir William Williams**, Speaker of the House of Commons and ancestor of the **Williams Wynn family of Wynnstay**. He was member for Pembroke county in successive Parliaments until he was defeated by his neighbour John Campbell of Stackpole in 1727. He was sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1707 and lord lieutenant until his death in 1753. The family tradition that his vote and that of **Griffith Rice**, member for Carmarthen, ensured the Hanoverian succession is based on a misconception.

He was succeeded by his son, Sir WILLIAM OWEN, the 4th baronet, who married his cousin Anne Williams. During his father's lifetime he had been member for Pembroke borough from 1722, but in 1754 he transferred to the county. He died in 1781, aged 84 years.

His son, Sir HUGH OWEN, the 5th baronet, married Anne, daughter of John Colby of Bletherston and died in 1786 leaving an only son, HUGH OWEN, 6th baronet, aged 4. He died, unmarried, in 1809 aged 27 - the last of the direct line of the Owen family of Orielton.

The 6th baronet had bequeathed his property to John Lord, son of Joseph Lord and his wife Corbetta, who was the daughter of Lt.-general John Owen, second son of Sir Arthur Owen, the 3rd baronet. He took the name of Owen and was created a baronet in 1813 - Sir JOHN (LORD) OWEN. The original baronetcy remained in the male line and became extinct on the death of Sir WILLIAM OWEN BARLOW, 8th baronet, who died, unmarried, in 1851.

The resources of the Orielton estate had been heavily drained by successive parliamentary elections which were not only bitterly contested locally but were often the subject of petitions in which irregularities were alleged. The influence of the **Philipps** family of Picton castle became powerful in the latter part of the 18th century, and the Orielton candidate was several times defeated. Matters reached a climax in the Reform agitation. In May 1831 Sir John Owen, first baronet of the new creation, was opposed in the county by **Robert Fulke Greville**. Sir John was returned, but unseated on petition. In the following October he was returned by an increased majority. The expense was enormous and embarrassed both parties. Sir John ceased to reside at Orielton for some years before it was sold in 1857. He died late in 1861. (For some late Owen of Orielton Papers see **NLW MSS 1073-7**).

Author

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