

DAVID SAMWELL - "I WAS THERE"

Professor Robert Owen

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Imperial Hotel Llandudno

David was born at Nantglyn near Denbigh on October 15th 1751; - the son of William Samwell the local vicar and grandson of the vicar of Betws Gwerfyl Goch. He ventured early to London eventually qualifying as Surgeon to the Navy and gaining his FRCS in 1775 - when aged 24; thereafter serving on around ten men-of-war over a period of 18 years.

The state of Naval Surgery in early C18 will be described, when Samwell inherited the practice of surgery from early pioneers such as Woodall, Wiseman, Hunter and others; when attending to injured seamen and limb amputation with no anaesthetics or antisepsis was the order of the day. In his early career he served on Captain James Cook's ships - *Resolution* and *Discovery* as 2nd Mate, on Cook's three voyages to the South Seas, sadly without witnessing his captain's murder by local natives in Hawaii in 1779. Following his naval career he served as Surgeon to POW's in Versailles: finally retiring, still a bachelor, to Fetter's Lane by Fleet. He was an accomplished poet in Welsh and English and well read in the Classics. In his mature years he supported Welsh Societies in London serving as secretary of the Gwyneddigion Society being president in 1797. He was also a member of the 'Cymmrodorion', responsible for founding the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd. He corresponded often with Morrisiaid Môn and was admirer of Iolo Morganwg, Twm o'r Nant and Dafydd ap Gwilym. Samwell died in 1798 and was buried at St Dunstan's by Fleet, London