

FOULKES, ISAAC (Llyfrbryf; 1836 - 1904), newspaper proprietor and publisher

Name: Isaac Foulkes
Pseudonym: Llyfrbryf
Date of birth: 1836
Date of death: 1904
Spouse: Sinah Foulkes (née Owen)
Spouse: Anna Foulkes
Parent: Frances Foulkes
Parent: Peter Foulkes
Gender: Male
Occupation: newspaper proprietor and publisher
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing
Author: William Williams

Born 9 November 1836 at Llanfwrog, Denbighshire, son of Peter and Frances Foulkes. He was apprenticed as a compositor to Isaac Clarke, Ruthin, but went to Liverpool on Christmas eve 1854, before completing his apprenticeship. He spent some years as a compositor in the *Amserau* printing office and then went to the printing works of David Marples. He set up a press of his own in 1862 at 28 King Street (renamed Kinglake Street in 1868). He made several moves before finally settling down at the Don Chambers, Paradise Street, c. 1896. In Gore's *Liverpool Directory* he is described in 1862 as a bookseller, in 1863 as a printer, and in 1870 as a publisher.

The first book published by him was probably the small hymn book, *Llyfr Emynau*, for the Welsh Congregationalists. The most notable of his early publications was the first edition, in three parts (1862-4) at one shilling each, of *Cymru Fu*, a collection of Welsh fables, romances, and traditions, which, with few exceptions (and the authors of these are all named), he wrote himself although there is no indication of this in the work itself; he later sold the copyright of this popular book to Hughes and Son, of Wrexham. In 1870 he published *Enwogion Cymru*, for many years the largest and best-known Welsh biographical dictionary; this also was originally published in shilling parts. Much of it was written by Foulkes himself and he was its editor as well as its publisher. From then onward he published a large number of Welsh books, including many cheap reprints of the better-known poets and prose writers. Among the more important of the books which issued from his press were *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, 1873, *Y Mabinogion Cymreig*, 1880, *Iolo Manuscripts*, 2nd ed., 1888, *Philip Yorke, The Royal Tribes of Wales*, 1887, and *John Fisher, The Cefn Coch MSS.*, 1899. He published some outstanding biographies, including those of *Thomas Charles Edwards*, *John Hughes* (1827-1893), *Daniel Owen* the novelist, *John Ceiriog Hughes* (Ceiriog), and the poems and letters of *Goronwy Owen*. In his cheaper publications, especially the shilling series 'Cyfres y Ceinion,' were included the works of *Hiraethog*, *Ceiriog*, *Elfed*, and many others; the smaller threepenny series, 'Cyfres y Clasuron Cymreig,' included such well-known works as *Y Bardd Cwsg*, *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn*, and the poetry of *John Blackwell* (Alun), etc. He also contributed to the *Transactions* of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion.

He was the author of several novels, including *Rheinallt ab Gruffydd*, 1874, and *Y Ddau Efell, neu Llanllonydd*, 1875, and also contributed, in his younger days, to the Welsh periodical press, particularly *Y Cronicl*, *Yr Herald*, and *Yr Amserau*.

It is, however, as the founder, owner, and editor of *Y Cymro* that Isaac Foulkes is best-known. The first issue of this Welsh newspaper is dated 22 May 1890. Politically a Liberal and a fervent advocate of peace, Foulkes's main purpose was the preservation of the Welsh language and its literature. He did more than any other publisher to popularize Welsh books. During that period, i.e. towards the end of the 19th century, when the literary output of Welsh authors was at a low ebb, Foulkes, through his newspaper and by his publication of cheap reprints of Welsh classics, rendered an inestimable service to the ordinary Welshman.

Foulkes married (1) 1860, Anna Foulkes, Ruthin (died 1900), and (2) 1904, Sinah Owen, Hafod Elwy. He died suddenly at Rhewl, near Ruthin, 2 November 1904, and was buried at Llanbedr in the Vale of Clwyd.

Author

William Williams, (1885 - 1950)

Sources

Y Cymro, 25 May 1911

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Catalogau (1770)

Transactions of the Liverpool Welsh National Society

Hugh Evans (Liverpool), papers, letters, etc.

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Isaac Foulkes](#)

Works

Isaac Foulkes 'Llyfrbryf,' *John Ceiriog Hughes ei fywyd, ei athrylith, a'i waitf*(Liverpool 1887)

Isaac Foulkes 'Llyfrbryf,' *Daniel Owen, y nofelydd: bywgraffiad* (Liverpool 1903)

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Published date: 1959

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APA Citation



Williams, W., (1959). FOULKES, ISAAC (Llyfrbryf; 1836 - 1904), newspaper proprietor and publisher. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 9 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-FOUL-ISA-1836>

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