

MILLS, RICHARD Rhydderch Hael (1809-1844), musician

Name: Richard Mills
Pseudonym: Rhydderch Hael
Date of birth: 1809
Date of death: 1844
Child: Richard Mills
Parent: Jane Mills
Parent: Henry Mills
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music; Religion
Author: Gwilym Prichard Ambrose

Born in March 1809 at Tynewydd, Llanidloes, son of the second marriage of **Henry Mills**. Leaving school at 11, he was apprenticed to weaving. When only 15 he became known as a musician, for his hymn-tune 'Maes-y-llan' was printed in *Seren Gomer*; and he was an active member of Bethel (Llanidloes) Musical Society. In 1835 *Y Gwladgarwr* printed a lecture of his on music. He took prizes for hymn-tunes at the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion eisteddfod of 1838, and at a Liverpool eisteddfod in 1840. In 1840 appeared his *Caniadau Seion* - supplement in 1842. These two collections greatly influenced congregational singing in Wales, and were landmarks in the story of its improvement; they contained hymn-tunes by Mills himself and by **J. Ambrose Lloyd**, and **Rosser Beynon**, and anthems from Handel and Haydn. More tunes and anthems appeared in *Yr Arweinydd Cerddorol* (three parts, 1842-5, the last posthumous), with hints on music and on singing; in this work a German hymn-tune (J. S. Bach's 'Mannheim') appeared for the first time in Wales. The three parts had a very wide sale, and greatly improved congregational singing. Mills also lectured widely on this subject. He died 24 December 1844; his widow married **John Pryse**.

His son, RICHARD MILLS (1840 - 1903), carried the family musical tradition into east Denbighshire. On his father's death the boy had been sent to his maternal grandfather at Newtown, but later he returned to Llanidloes as a staff-notation compositor in his stepfather **John Pryse**'s printing office. He studied music diligently, won an eisteddfod prize for his hymn-tune 'Pen-dref,' and another (1864) for a canon for three voices. He moved to Wrexham to serve the publishing firm of Hughes and Son, whose music-publishing he supervised down to 1877, while conducting choirs at Wrexham, Broughton, and Bangor Iscoed. But his marriage in 1876 with Sarah Owen of Aberderyn, Rhosllannerchrugog, led him, in 1878, to set up a press there - where, in 1894, he also started the *Rhos Herald* newspaper, which he edited till his death, and where, too, he conducted a very successful choir. He composed a good deal of music - anthems, hymn-tunes, and songs - and arranged many hymn-tunes. His hymn-tune 'Arweiniad' is well known. He died 18 May 1903, and was buried in Rhosllannerchrugog cemetery.

Author

Principal **Gwilym Prichard Ambrose**

Sources

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