

MORRIS, ROBERT (died 1768), industrialist

Name: Robert Morris
Date of death: 1768
Spouse: Margaret Morris (née Jenkins)
Child: Bridget Lockwood (née Morris)
Child: Margaret Desenfans (née Morris)
Child: Robert Morris
Child: John Morris
Parent: Robert Morris
Gender: Male
Occupation: industrialist
Area of activity: Business and Industry
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

son of Robert Morris of Bishop's Castle and Cleobury Mortimer. He entered business in North Wales and married Margaret Jenkins of Machynlleth; but moved to Tredegar. In 1727 he joined Richard Lockwood and Edward Gibbon (the historian's grandfather) in buying a copper-works at 'Landore' (Glandŵr), Swansea; they had works afterwards at Llangyfelach and Forest, together with brass-wire mills and collieries. Morris lived at Clasemont, between Llangyfelach and the Tawe river.

Soon after his death, his second son (Sir) JOHN MORRIS (1745 - 1819), born 15 July 1745, took a step which put the family name literally 'on the map.' It is not perfectly clear whether it was he or his father who built the 'castellated mansion of collegiate appearance' (*Walter Davies, General View of the Agriculture. ... of South Wales* 134) near 'the Clase,' to house forty families of their workpeople, with a shoemaker and a tailor for their service; but it is to John Morris that the tourist-books (e.g. *John Evans, Malkin, Wood*) unanimously ascribe the building of the village of Morrision - said to have been planned by the minister and bridge-builder *William Edwards* (1719 - 1789) of Eglwysilan. John Morris was made a baronet in 1806; he went to live at Sketty Park and died 25 June 1819. The baronetcy still survives, but the contact with industrialism has long ceased. Robert Morris's papers have been given to the University College library at Swansea.

The career of Robert Morris's elder son ROBERT MORRIS (1743 or 1744 - 1797?) was very different. He went up (1760) to Oriel College, Oxford, graduated in 1764, was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1767, and pleaded in the Great Sessions in South Wales. But his main interest lay in politics; he supported John Wilkes, and was the first secretary of the 'Society for Supporting the Bill of Rights' founded by Home Tooke in support of Wilkes - but resigned in 1770. In May 1772 he fell into considerable disrepute, involving the loss of friends and collaborators like *Watkin Lewes*, by eloping to the Continent with a ward of his, aged 14, an heiress; a clergyman at Lille refused to marry them, and the town authorities imprisoned Morris for a while; but he managed to get the ceremony performed in Holland and again in Denmark - it was annulled by the British courts in 1784. Meantime, he had twice (at least) fallen into fresh trouble. In 1782 he was challenged to fight a duel for libelling the former American general Benedict Arnold, but the matter was settled. And in the same year he acted as second in another duel, in which one of the duellists was killed - Morris and his principal were tried for this at the Old Bailey, but Morris was acquitted. His name appears in the list of (uninitiated) members of the Cymmrodorion Society in 1778. He died 'in the East Indies'; Foster says 29 November 1793, but *Burke's Peerage* gives 1797 as the year.

Of the three daughters of the elder Robert Morris, Margaret married Noel Francis Desenfans (see in *D.N.B.*), art-collector, and Bridget married into the family of her father's partner, Lockwood.

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Sources

(a) *Burke's* *Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage*

Thomas Nicholas, *The History and Antiquities of Glamorgan*, 179

George Grant Francis, *The Smelting of Copper in the Swansea District, from the time of Elizabeth to the present day* (Swansea 1867) (indexed)

(b) Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford*

E. Alfred Jones in *Y Cymmrodor* xxix, and references therein

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