

LLOYD, DAVID MYRDDIN (1909-1981), librarian and Welsh scholar

Name: David Myrddin Lloyd
Date of birth: 1909
Date of death: 1981
Gender: Male
Occupation: librarian and Welsh scholar
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Brynley Francis Roberts

D. Myrddin Lloyd was born 15 April 1909 in 399 Heol Ganol, Fforest-fach (y Gendros), Swansea, the elder of the two sons of William Henry Lloyd, a carpenter from Carmarthen, and his wife, Eleanor, the daughter of **Reverend David Davies**, 'Dafi Dafis' of Rhydcymerau (1814-1891), a character well known for his humour and stories, many of whose personal characteristics were inherited by his grandson.

Myrddin Lloyd was educated at Swansea grammar school and then in Swansea University College where he gained a first-class honours degree in Welsh in 1929. He also followed courses in philosophy and developed a serious interest in the subject that became an area of study for him throughout his life. He gained his MA research degree in 1932 for a notable pioneering dissertation on the language and literary qualities of the poetry of **Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr**. This was one of the first modern discussions not so much of the language of the 12th and 13th-century court poets as on their stylistics and literary concepts. Little of the work of the Gogynfeirdd (Welsh court poets) had been adequately edited at this time and Myrddin Lloyd's mastery of their language, metrics and style, and particularly these features of the work of **Cynddelw**, one of the most challenging of all the poets, was no mean achievement. Some of Myrddin Lloyd's research was published in *Y Llenor*, 11, 13 (1932, 1934), *Études celtiques*, 5 (1949) and as notes in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* in 1932, 1933, but he continued to publish reviews and new studies in the 1950s and 1960s in *Llên Cymru*, 1 (1951), *Studia Celtica*, 3 (1967) and most notably in his G. J. Williams Memorial Lecture, Rhai agweddau ar ddysg y Gogynfeirdd (1971) and his articles on individual court poets in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography to 1940*.

He spent some time at the National University of Ireland, Dublin, in 1931 and again in 1932-34 after his election to a University of Wales Fellowship, following courses in Old and Modern Irish. He described his experiences in *Heddiw*, 3 (June 1939). He never lost his mastery of the Irish language and his study and love of its literature continued throughout his life. In 1934 he published with Tomás Ó Cléirigh a collection of short stories translated from Irish, Pádraic Ó Conaire, *Ystoriau byr o'r Wyddeleg*. On his return to Wales from Ireland he was for a short time an extra-mural class tutor in Glamorganshire but he was appointed to a post as Assistant in the department of printed books in the National Library of Wales in April 1935. He married Elizabeth Mary (May) Williams from Cardiff in 1939; they had one daughter.

A nationalist and pacifist of conviction he served in the Fire Service in Swansea during World War II and later at the offices in Colwyn Bay. At the end of the war he returned to the Library, though he was offered a post in the Welsh department at the University College of South Wales, Cardiff. He was promoted Deputy Keeper and Assistant Keeper in the department of printed books and he was responsible for some notable exhibitions.

In 1953 he was appointed keeper of printed books in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, where he played an important part in the development of the Library in the 1950s. He seized the opportunities offered by the completion of a new library building and an improved funding regime to establish new departments of maps and of music and to develop the historical collections significantly. Under his leadership the Library established closer links with other Scottish libraries, a development that was recognised in his election as President of the Scottish Library Association in 1972. Myrddin Lloyd was an enthusiastic and active supporter of the Welsh community in Edinburgh and he also immersed himself in the Gaelic life and culture of the Highlands and Islands.

He retired from his post in 1974 and returned to Aberystwyth to be part once again of the town community and Welsh cultural and political life. As well as being a leading figure in his profession, Myrddin Lloyd was a scholar of wide culture and a literary critic knowledgeable in the Welsh literature of all periods. The selection that he edited together with his wife in *A Book of Wales* (1953) is a clear indication of their taste and judgement. He began to publish scholarly articles and reviews in *Y Llenor* and *Yr Efrwydd* when he was a research student in the 1930s and the variety of subjects that were discussed in the host of publications that followed in *Heddiw*, *Yr Athro*, *Llên Cymru*, *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, *Efrydiau Athronyddol*, a series of Welsh pacifist pamphlets (Pamffledi Heddychwyr Cymru), and symposia up to his untimely death, is remarkable: politics and political theory, pacifism, medieval court poetry and poets of the gentry, Methodist literature, **Williams Pantycelyn** in particular, **Kate Roberts**, an edition of *Atgofion am Sirhowy a'r Cylch (Myfyr Wyn)*, 1961). But the work that best revealed Myrddin Lloyd's mature interests and the breadth of his learning was the three volumes of selections of **Emrys ap Iwan's** articles and letters (1937, 1939, 1940) and his monograph in the *Writers of Wales* series in 1979. These are possibly Myrddin Lloyd's most important work, a crucial contribution to the recognition of **Emrys ap Iwan's** place in concepts of contemporary Welsh nationalism.

He published articles in the *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society* on 'The Irish Gaelic and Welsh printed book' (1948), Welsh bibliography (1948), 'Four centuries of Welsh printed literature: an exhibition' (1947) and on Irish publishing (1936). *Efrydiau Athronyddol*, 1939 and 1940 contain comprehensive studies of Søren Kierkegaard that are among the earliest in Welsh, and other numbers contain reviews and articles on, e.g. contemporary French existentialism (1948), 'Meddwl Cymru yn y Canol Oesoedd' (1950) - his two critiques of Edgar de Bruyne's three-volume *Études d'esthétique médiévale* appeared in *Llên Cymru*, 1 (1950-51) - and 'Cymru ac Ewrop' (1964). He was well versed in the literatures and cultures of France and Germany and he bequeathed to the National Library of Wales his large collection of books in Romanian and on Romanian language, history and literature. He was a skilled translator, and was the natural choice to edit *O erddi eraill* (1961) in the Welsh Academy's translations of poetry series.

He collected and edited the work of his brother, *Emynau a cherddi Islwyn Lloyd* (Abertawe, 1977). Islwyn Lloyd (1916-1974) was a cultured school teacher and like his brother he was a staunch nationalist though his pacifism was severely shaken by the wars that followed World War II. See the honest and balanced introduction to the book and also the appreciation of Islwyn Lloyd by **J. Gwyn Griffiths** in *Y Goleuad* 4 September 1974.

He was assistant secretary of the Welsh Bibliographical Society 1946-53 and editor of its Journal 1950-53, a member of the editorial panel, and assistant editor, of *Efrydiau Athronyddol* 1948-70, and president of the philosophy section of the University of Wales Guild of Graduates in 1962-63. He worked tirelessly especially in academic circles (he was an extremely thorough external examiner in Welsh in the University of Wales in the 1970s), and he continued to lecture and publish even after suffering a heart attack in 1975. Myrddin Lloyd was a man of strong convictions and, like his brother, there was a deep seriousness in his attitude to life and to his religion. But to a greater extent than Islwyn, Myrddin concealed this side of his personality and publicly he was great company with a never ending stock of humorous stories that invariably closed with a slap on his thigh and wave upon wave of laughter.

Myrddin Lloyd died unexpectedly on 17 August 1981 in Morlaix, Brittany while he and his wife were visiting the country with a group of friends from Aberystwyth. The funeral service was at Seilo chapel Aberystwyth on 26 August and then at Morrision crematorium.

Author

Dr Brynley Francis Roberts

Sources

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B. G. Owens, *Taliesin*, 44 (Gorffennaf 1982), 8-17

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D. Myrddin Lloyd's papers and correspondence are at the National Library of Wales

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