

SQUIRES, DOROTHY (1915-1998), popular singer

Name: Dorothy Squires
Date of birth: 1915
Date of death: 1998
Parent: Emily Squires (née Rickards)
Parent: Archibald James Squires
Gender: Female
Occupation: popular singer
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts
Author: Trevor Herbert

She was born in a mobile home in Bridge Shop Field, Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire on March 25 1915, to Archibald James Squires, a steelworker, and his wife Emily (née Rickards). The couple had married in Newport in 1911. Dorothy's original name was Edna May Squires. She was raised in the village of Dafen near Llanelli, and it was at the Ritz Ballroom, Llanelli that she made her first appearance as a singer with the Denza Players, a local dance band.

A pretty, characterful and tuneful singer, she decided at the age of twenty to leave Wales, where she had worked in mundane jobs, including a period behind the counter in the local Woolworth's store, to seek her fortune in London. She was soon working in the West End at the Burlington Club and in 1936 appeared on BBC radio. About this time she met the bandleader Billy Reid (1902-1974), a married man with whom she formed a close professional and personal relationship. Her association with Reid, who was extremely well-connected, was helpful to her career, and many of her most successful songs in the years surrounding the war were written and accompanied by him. These included 'The Gypsy', 'This is my mother's day' and 'Safe in my arms'.

In 1945 she became a resident artiste in the BBC's '*Variety Bandbox*' programme and performed at the London Palladium. Her relationship with Reid, which had always been as volatile as it was productive, came to an undignified end in 1951 when the two were involved in an unseemly altercation in the bar of a Llanelli theatre they jointly owned. The ensuing legal dispute over the couple's assets was the first of many in Squires' prolific career as a litigant.

Following the estrangement from Reid, she met the then unknown actor and male model Roger Moore, with whom she was immediately smitten. In 1953 Moore divorced his wife, married Squires and the two went to Hollywood with the aim of promoting his career. Squires was mainly responsible for negotiating Moore's part in the MGM movie *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, in which he played opposite Elizabeth Taylor. This put Moore's career on a steep upward trajectory. As his opportunities became more numerous, hers began to fade. Moore was reported to be involved in infidelities and in 1961 announced he was leaving Squires for the actress Luisa Mattioli. Squires, devastated by the news, refused to grant a divorce until 1968.

Squires' developing impoverishment was aggravated by her tendency to embark on litigation on the merest provocation. Several media organisations and individuals were the target of her ire. Some cases were successful but many were not, and in 1987 their frequency led to her receiving the rare but unwelcome distinction of being declared a 'vexatious litigant'. In effect, she was forbidden from launching further litigation without the express consent of the High Court. By this time she had been declared bankrupt.

Dorothy Squires was a show business star blessed with vivacity and beauty. Furthermore, and like most really successful popular singers, she possessed genuine musical talent. She also had a large, loyal and well organised fan-base. In the period when she flourished she was one of the most charismatic and successful British performers. The more tumultuous events of her personal life should not overshadow her many achievements as a consummate performer of popular music.

The final phase of her life involved a sad but moving turn. She suffered the indignity of eviction from her elaborate home. News of this reached Esme Coles, a shop-keeper and dedicated fan, in the village of Trebanog in the lower Rhondda valley. Mrs Coles owned a vacant house in the village which she placed at Squires' disposal free of charge. Squires immediately accepted, arriving furtively in the middle of the night with a couple of cases containing personal belongings and several boxes of legal papers. She lived quietly in this house, 153 Trebanog Road, for the remainder of her life, reclusive, but befriended by the villagers.

She died of lung cancer on April 14 1998 at Llwynypia Hospital in a room, so it is said, decorated at Roger Moore's behest by the largest bouquet of which this small local hospital had ever taken delivery. Her remains were interred at Streatham Park Cemetery, a burial ground associated with the Variety Artists Benevolent fund.

Author

Trevor Herbert

Sources

Official biographical sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Obituaries: *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* (all April 15 1998)

BBC Cymru/Wales documentary *Rain Rain Go Away* (1998)

Further Reading

Johnny Tudor, *My heart is bleeding: the life of Dorothy Squires* (The History Press 2017)

David Bret, *Dorothy Squires: Tortured Diva* (2016)

Wikipedia Article: [Dorothy Squires](#)

Sound and Film

Archif ITV Cymru/Wales Archive: [Dorothy Squires - 1966](#)

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Published date: 2015-08-14

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APA Citation



Herbert, T., (2015). SQUIRES, DOROTHY (1915-1998), popular singer. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 8 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s10-SQUI-MAY-1915>

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