

MORRIS, JOHN RICHARD (1879 - 1970), bookseller, writer

Name: John Richard Morris
Date of birth: 1879
Date of death: 1970
Spouse: Elizabeth Morris
Parent: Jane Morris
Parent: Richard Morris
Gender: Male
Occupation: bookseller, writer
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing
Author: Mary Auronwy James

Born 13 August 1879, son of Richard Morris, a quarryman, who died 6 March 1884 at Ebeneser, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarfonshire, and Jane his wife, who remarried. He attended Penisa'r-waun and Llanrug schools, though the Sunday school and the Band of Hope also played an important part in his education. At eleven years of age he went to work on his uncle's smallholding for two years, and after seven years' employment in a slate quarry he ran away to become a collier in Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, 1899-1910, when he was obliged to retire because of ill-health. Eventually he moved to Liverpool where he held various posts until he and Rolant Wyn opened a Welsh book-shop there. The business expanded to include typing, printing and publishing Welsh plays under the name ' Wyn Edwards and Morris '. They also translated the plays of Ibsen and others into Welsh, but the business failed during the depression. In 1933 J.R. Morris opened a very successful Welsh book-shop in Caernarfon which was sold when he retired aged 80. From 1939 onwards he lived at Hafod Lân, Bethel.

He was a member of a musical family and won prizes as a soloist, as well as a crown and many chairs for poetry. He was a prominent member of the Welsh community whilst living in England, as secretary of local eisteddfodau, a Sunday school teacher, conductor of a children's choir and a lay preacher. He became one of the founders of Undeb y Ddraig Goch in Liverpool in 1918, a movement supporting self-government for Wales. He held classes teaching cynganedd and his papers at the National Library of Wales contain a large collection of *englynion*. His poems and articles appeared in many newspapers and periodicals. But he is best remembered as a bookseller; he attended countless auctions to buy books, many of which he sold to America. A notable aspect of his shop was its extensive stock of music - he published a catalogue of 800 Welsh solos - and he held in stock every Welsh play he could acquire. He was the author of a comedy, *Luned* (1928), and after retiring he wrote his autobiography, *Atgofion Ilyfrwerthwr* (1963) and a romantic novel, *Allwedd Serch*, which is among his papers at N.L.W.

He married (spring 1905 ?) and he and his wife Elizabeth had two children who died young. His wife died 21 September 1950; he died 26 April 1970 and was buried in Llanrug churchyard.

Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

Sources

J.R. Morris MSS. at N.L.W.

The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, Aberdŷr

[Dafydd Islwyn, *Y Geninen*, 1973, 78-83]

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