

MORRIS, ROBERT DAVID (1871 - 1948), itinerant bookseller and author

Name: Robert David Morris
Date of birth: 1871
Date of death: 1948
Spouse: Elizabeth Morris (née Hughes)
Spouse: Elizabeth Morris (née Roberts)
Parent: Hannah Morris
Parent: David Morris
Gender: Male
Occupation: itinerant bookseller and author
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Literature and Writing
Author: Derwyn Morris Jones

Born at Nant, Coed-poeth, Denbighshire, 18 December 1871, the son of David and Hannah Morris. He left school early and went to work in a coalmine. After a few years as a collier, he opened a Welsh newspaper and book-shop in the High Street at Coed-poeth. In the 1920s he began to travel throughout north Wales, selling Welsh books which he collected from the Brython Press (Hugh Evans & Sons, Liverpool) and Hughes & Son, Wrexham. He and his little car became well known to hundreds of people in the rural areas, and he called regularly at out-of-the-way farms and cottages. He carried on until his death and was one of the last itinerant booksellers in Wales.

Though his formal education had been but slight, when he saw the need for popular literature in Welsh he resolved to meet the demand. In the preface to his second novel he drew attention to the reaction of young readers to the lack of Welsh novels which led them to prefer popular English novels. He saw the novel as the most effective means of winning them back to read Welsh. His first novel *Derwyn*, 1924, attracted many readers. It was followed by *Serch Gwalia*, 1925, *Merch y castell*, 1928, and *Llwybr y merthyr*, 1935. He published two comedies, *Ffordd Sera Parri* and *Gŵr Betsan Huws*, and a play, *Y Clwyf*, depicting the devastating effect of World War I upon a particular family. A large number of performances of his comedies were produced in all parts of Wales.

He had a passion for reform in Wales. He was one of the leaders of the I.L.P. in his district. He reacted against the system which made Welsh a language of religion and chapel and enthroned English as the language of education and trade. He insisted on speaking Welsh in the shops of Wrexham which had adopted the new fashion. He dedicated his first novel to [E. T. John](#), M.P. in recognition of 'his zeal and efforts for Wales'.

For many years he was a Sunday school teacher of a class of young men at Salem, Coed-poeth. He taught those pupils to detest all wars, and inspired many of them with his vision of a more just world.

He married (1) Elizabeth Roberts, of Nant, Coed-poeth, who died in 1906; and (2) Elizabeth Hughes of Blaenau Ffestiniog. He died 1 August 1948, at the age of 77, and was buried in the Coed-poeth public cemetery.

Author

Reverend Derwyn Morris Jones

Sources

Personal knowledge

Porfeydd, 1978

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