

Who were the Subscribers to William Meredith Morris' Book
A Glossary of the Demetian Dialect (1910)?

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At the turn of the twentieth century, an author would often publish a book as a personal venture, using a local printer, and ensuring that the costs were covered by asking beforehand for subscriptions. Enough copies would be printed to satisfy this demand, and there would be no need to pay for copies which could not be sold.

This is what William Meredith Morris did when he published *A Glossary of the Demetian Dialect*, one of the earliest collections of dialect vocabulary in Welsh to appear in print. The focus is on Cwm Gwaun in Pembrokeshire, and the book contains a wealth of material explaining the meaning of local dialect words, through stories about folk customs in the district, and snippets of conversation between people who used these words naturally in their everyday speech. William Meredith Morris had grown up in Cwm Gwaun, but by 1910 he had settled in the Rhondda, as the vicar of Blaenclydach near Tonypany. The book was printed by a local company, Evans & Short, and includes a list in alphabetical order of all the people and institutions who had subscribed - a total of 231 names. This list is not included in the facsimile edition published in 1991 by Llanerch, and one must turn to the original version to see it.

In an attempt to understand how an author who did not hold an academic post in the university might set about publishing a study of this kind, I decided that it would be worth trying to establish who had subscribed to the book. Who was willing to support this project? What was William Meredith Morris' social circle at this time? It is striking that the list of subscribers is a mixture of people from very different social backgrounds: some of them had a clear link with Pembrokeshire, but many were from other parts of Wales: some were well-known public figures and academics, who subscribed on a regular basis to new publications, but others were ordinary people who appear to have supported this book because of a personal link with the author or his family.

Family and Acquaintances

Looking first at the people who had probably subscribed because they knew the author personally, we find members of his family, neighbours from Pembrokeshire and Glamorganshire, and vicars who would have known him as colleagues in the Anglican church. On the whole there is no evidence that these people showed any particular interest in antiquities. Only one or two subscribed to other books, or joined a historical society, and it appears that their involvement here is for personal reasons only.

Naturally enough, members of William Meredith Morris' own family subscribed to the book - his mother Mrs Sarah Morris, his brother in law Jenkin Soarian Evans, and of course his two sons and two daughters (but this may well reflect the father's wishes rather than any enthusiasm on the part of the children). Several of his cousins appear here as well, two of them still farming in Pembrokeshire, one a Baptist minister in Newport, and three who had moved to the Rhondda - two of them successful businessmen in Porth, running grocery shops and a "mineral waters" factory [a building more recently known in popular music circles as the *Pop Factory*], and one with a shop in Trehafod. In 1910 William Meredith Morris was a widower, and it is interesting to see the name Gladys Lewis here, as she became his second wife later on in 1912. Later too his daughter married the curate, the Rev.. A. E. T. MacNamara, who also subscribed to the book, together with members of his family - his mother, his brother and his brother in law.

Personal contacts probably explain many other names too. William Meredith Morris was born in Cwm Gwaun and his family was still farming there. He had studied at the grammar school and later the theological college in Haverfordwest, and had been a Baptist minister in Cresswell Quay in south Pembrokeshire as a young man. It is not surprising therefore to find people from these three districts subscribing, among them shopkeepers, craftsmen, teachers, a journalist, a solicitor, a sanitary inspector, and the son of the Cresselly Arms public house licensee. In 1895 he left the Baptists and joined the Anglican church, and as a result moved to Glamorganshire, where he served as a curate first in Treherbert and then in Llangynwyd. He was appointed as the vicar of Blaenclydach near Tonypany in 1908, and stayed there for the rest of his life. The list once again reflects the progress of his career, and includes names from these three districts too - shopkeepers, miners, teachers, an architect, a printer. There are also some people who came originally from Pembrokeshire, but who by 1910 had moved to the Rhondda, and other parts of Glamorganshire. Had William Meredith Morris perhaps known them in the old days back in Pembrokeshire, or had he met them after coming to the south-east, the shared background forming an element in the friendship?

The summer and autumn of 1910, when he was preparing this book for publication, were a very difficult time in Blaenclydach and Tonypany. The miners had already been locked out from one pit, and the great strike was brewing. It is natural that he, as the vicar of the parish and a man who was well known for his political convictions, was acquainted with William Abraham (Mabon), the miners' agent, president of the South Wales Miners' Federation and Member of Parliament for the Rhondda. On the other side of the political divide were Harold Lloyd, a solicitor from Cardiff and parliamentary candidate for the Tories, and John Littlejohn the Tory agent. Another important figure at this time was Daniel Lleufer Thomas, the stipendiary magistrate, who later on in the year asked for the help of the army to restore public order, and prosecuted the strikers in court. Seeing their names among the list of subscribers reminds us that Blaenclydach was not a quiet, rural district, but rather one of the most turbulent parts of Wales at this time.

William Meredith Morris was in 1910 a vicar of the Anglican church, and it is not surprising to see that many members of the clergy subscribed to the book. The list includes vicars from parishes in Pembrokeshire, and some who were originally from the county but who were by now living in south-east Wales or in England. There are also many from Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire, not only from the Rhondda and the adjoining valleys, but also from further afield, including some who had local links but were by then living in England. There are comparatively few nonconformist ministers, but a small number subscribed in spite of any denominational disagreements.

Antiquarians and the University

The second set of subscribers is rather different. These are people who were interested in Welsh history and traditions, members of societies like the *Historical Society of West Wales*, the *Cambrian Archaeological Association*, and the *University of Wales Guild of Graduates*, including the Dialect section of the Guild, and they can be seen subscribing regularly to books of all kinds. It is not clear whether William Meredith Morris knew these people personally, or was merely aware that they would be willing to support a project such as the *Glossary* as a matter of principle, without of necessity having a personal link to the author. On the whole they were professional men, and we see here well-known names such as David Lloyd George and O. M. Edwards, although there also people from a humbler background such as Evan Jones, or "Ioan Buellt", a farmer from Llanwrtyd who spent much of his time collecting and recording the traditions of his home district.

Some of them had clear Pembrokeshire connections, and several had published articles and books on various aspects of the history of the county. Perhaps the most relevant here is the Rev. Arthur Wade-Evans, who was at the time a vicar in Gloucestershire, but came originally from Fishguard, and who had published a short description of the local dialect in the *Transactions of the Guild of Graduates* (1906) - *Fishguard Welsh (Cwmrâg Abergwaun)*. Was William Meredith Morris familiar with this earlier account of a dialect so close to his home in Cwm Gwaun?

He certainly knew one group of antiquarians in Glamorganshire quite well. Llangynwyd, where he served as a curate between 1899 and 1908, was the home of Thomas Christopher Evans, or "Cadrawd", to use the bardic name he preferred. Cadrawd had no formal education, but became something of an authority on the history of the district and the folk traditions of Glamorganshire, including the local dialect. There is plenty of evidence that the two men became friends, and it is natural that Cadrawd should have subscribed to this book. In 1907 John Griffiths came to Llangynwyd as a curate. He too had an interest in dialect, and was the author of a booklet *Y Wenhwyseg* (1902), an attempt to outline the main characteristics of spoken Welsh in Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire. Another member of this lively group, Lemuel John Hopkin-James, had collaborated with Cadrawd in writing the book *Hen Gwndidau*, and he too was a curate in the parish between 1898 and 1901.

We also find here the names of men who were important figures in the universities, in the field of Welsh and Celtic Studies:- Prof. Edward Anwyl from Aberystwyth, Prof. Thomas Powel from Cardiff, and Prof. Kuno Meyer from Liverpool and Dublin. Others had perhaps a more general interest in the field, men such as Sir Harry Reichel, the principal of the university college in Bangor, and Ellis Edwards, the principal of the theological college in Bala. One must also add to these names all the academic libraries which subscribed. In Wales these include the National Library, and the libraries of the colleges at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Lampeter, as well as the Welsh library at Aberystwyth. Outside Wales we find the British Museum Library, and libraries in the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, Dublin, Rennes and Leipzig. Besides these universities, there are also subscriptions from civic libraries in Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Birmingham.

Industrialists and Aristocrats

There is one other rather different set of names. Not the author's friends and neighbours this time, nor people who had a clear interest in history and traditions, but rather some of the most wealthy and influential people in Wales at this time. They were members of the *Cambrian Archaeological Association*, and subscribed to all kinds of books, but the impression we get is that this derived from a feeling of "noblesse oblige", a feeling that they had an obligation because of their status in society to support all sorts of cultural activities. Some of them were successful industrialists: Sir William Thomas Lewis (Lord Merthyr), the coal owner, and John Jenkins (Lord Glantawe), who owned tinsplate works in the Swansea district. Others were aristocrats in the traditional sense - Lord Kensington, Lord Tredegar, and Lord Kenyon. Sir John Talbot Dillwyn-Llewellyn was a member of a well-known family in Swansea, Arthur J. Williams a member of the family which established Williamstown in the Rhondda, and Mrs. Davies-Evans from Lanybyther was the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Cardiganshire. A very different group, who appear here in the list of subscribers side by side with farmers from Pembrokeshire, miners from the Rhondda, and university professors.

The Next Step

Finding out who all these people were who subscribed to the book was a laborious business. In the case of public figures, sources such as the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* and *Who's Who*, and the records of various societies provided useful information, and gave a clearer picture of their background. But a good deal of work was necessary so far as the others were concerned, searching through *Census Returns*, and various editions of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, and *Kelly's Trades Directory* to find the relevant details. A few have not been traced as yet, and I hope to complete this task in the future. It has not been possible to present all the information collected here, but those who are interested can find further details on the website www.draenog.co.uk .

I feel that this work has shed some light on the environment in which the *Glossary of the Demetian Dialect* was published, and it would now be interesting to compare this list of subscribers with the similar lists which appear in other books published at around this time, in order to develop a clearer picture of social and cultural networks in Wales in the early years of the twentieth century.