

PARRY-WILLIAMS, AMY (1910-1988), singer and author

Name: Amy Parry-williams
Date of birth: 1910
Date of death: 1988
Spouse: Thomas Herbert Parry-Williams
Parent: Mary Emiah Thomas (née Jones)
Parent: Lewis Thomas
Gender: Female
Occupation: singer and author
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Music; Performing Arts
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Born 18 December 1910 in Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire, the eldest of the three children of [Lewis Thomas](#) and his wife Mary Emiah (née Jones). Though registered as Emiah Jane, she was known throughout her life as Amy. Educated at Pontyberem school, Llanelli Girls' Grammar School, and the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where she graduated in 1932 with first class honours in Welsh, she became a teacher at Carmarthen Girls' Grammar School and then a lecturer at Barry Training College. In August 1942 she married her Professor at Aberystwyth, [T. H. Parry-Williams](#). There were no children of the marriage.

Amy showed musical promise at an early age, and along with her brother Madoc and sister Mary would compete regularly at eisteddfodau in Carmarthenshire and at regional and national level. She won prizes for singing and for penillion singing, a craft which her father had mastered, and it was he who wrote penillion settings for her. During her time at university she performed regularly, scoring a particular success in the lead role in the opera 'Rhosyn y Coleg'.

She had a particular interest in Welsh folk traditions, and registered for an MA degree on the connection between words and tunes in the Welsh folk tradition: her detailed notes for that work (which was never completed) are to be found among her papers at the National Library of Wales. She published two valuable articles on the texts of Welsh folk-songs, and recorded folk-songs for the Welsh Recorded Music Society in the late 1940s, which among the earliest Welsh-language recordings to be reviewed by the *Gramophone magazine*. She performed programmes of Welsh folk-songs at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, at the London Welsh concerts at the Albert Hall, produced a recording of penillion settings entitled *Canu penillion* (1958), and acted as an adjudicator at the National Eisteddfod on several occasions. She assisted her husband in his translations of musical works into Welsh, and together they wrote the words 'Beth yw'r haf i mi?' (What is summer to me?) to an eighteenth-century Welsh harp tune.

Her short story, 'Henrietta', appeared in the collection *Ystoriau heddiw*, edited by [T. H. Parry-Williams](#) in 1938, and it was he no doubt who encouraged her to continue to write after their marriage. She published a farce, *Ty ar y rhos*, which had been written for her students at Barry, in 1944, and her collections *Deg o storïau* in 1950, *Y plât piwtar a storïau eraill* in 1962, and *Dyddiadur Jane Parry* in 1965. Her work is notable for its fluency of language and lively characterisation. She was also an active broadcaster, writing and singing songs for children for the radio series '*Ar lin Mam*', and presenting the television programmes '*Llofffa*' and '*Canu'r bobol*' relating to the folk tradition, and was one of the first directors of the commercial television company HTV.

A handsome, gracious and private woman, she gave her husband much support in his public life as well as enjoying her own successful career. She died at Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth on 28 January 1988, and her ashes were buried with those of her husband at Beddgelert.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

T.H.Parry-Williams and Amy Parry-Williams papers at the National Library of Wales, also a photograph album

Baner ac Amserau Cymru, 14 November 1956

Cwm Gwendraeth (Llandysul 2000)

Y Faner, 12 February 1988

Folk Song Journal of the Welsh Folk-Song Society 34, 2011

Further Reading

Additional Links

NLW Archives: Papurau T. H. Parry-Williams ac Amy Parry-Williams: R-Y: Papurau'r Fonesig Amy Parry-Williams

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