

Benjamin Morrison

*He wrote easily, lightly, and with remarkable rhythm, and he could vary his scansion to suit his theme.*

[*Shetland News* obituary, 17 October 1935]

Benjamin George Morrison (1890-1935) was a Shetland poet who served in World War One. His family originated in Laxfirth, North Nesting, although much of his life was spent in Lerwick. His mother, Helen Manson, died when he was three. His father died not too long after. A sister died young in 1911. His aunt Mary Manson brought him up. By World War One he was working in Glasgow and joined the Scottish Rifles. He saw action in Palestine, was wounded in the head by shrapnel, returned to the U.K., and went on to France.

His post-war life featured disablement and ill-health. A short career as a Merchant Navy steward led to him contracting malaria. Unfit for further service he retrained as a hairdresser in London, aided by his brother Captain Laurence Henry Morrison. His health deteriorated further and he lost the use of his right hand and left leg. He returned to Shetland and his aunt, dying after some years of further difficulties.

He wrote poetry for most of his life, along with articles. *He'll Give Them Back*, a poem, was published in the Shetland Times, January 1914. The Shetland News of February that year saw a dialogue by him about the position of cottars in Shetland.

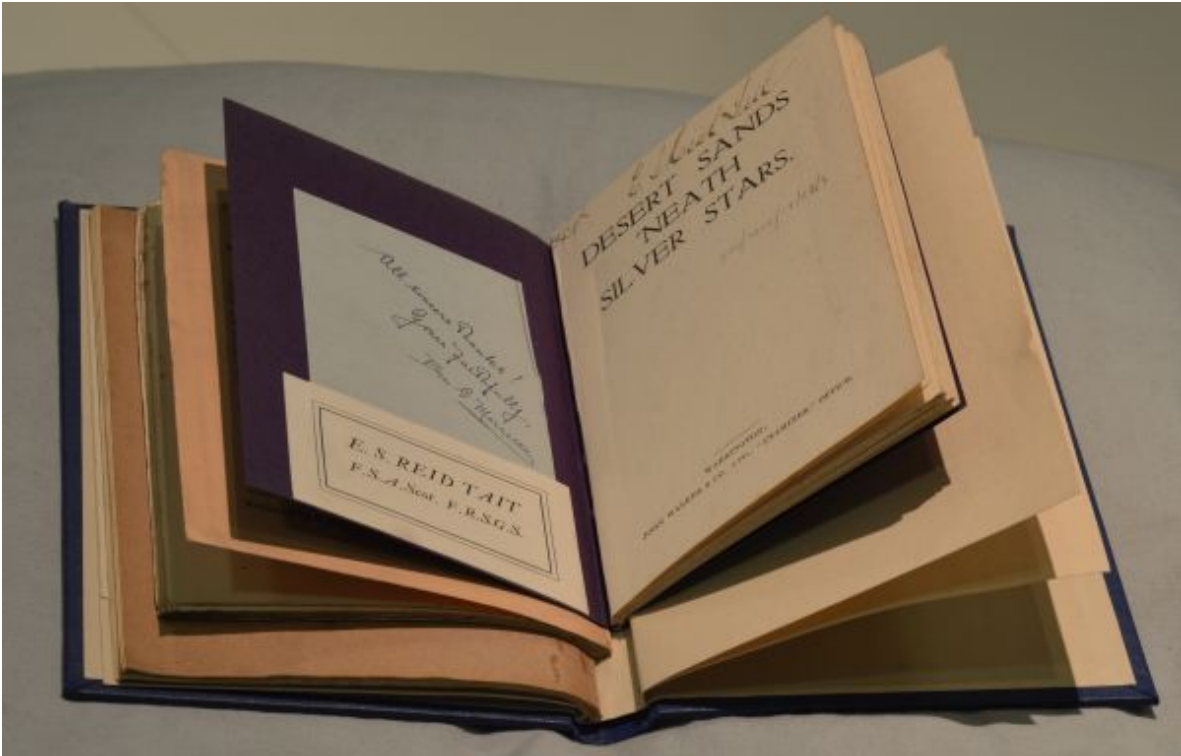
His obituary in the Shetland News noted that his best work was done after the war, with publication outside the islands. Probably this brought him much needed income. At one point an article won him a radio as a prize.

He published one volume of poetry during the war, largely inspired by his soldiering in Palestine *Desert Sands 'Neath Silver Stars* (Warrington, March 1918). Only one poem features Shetland dialect -- *Knittin fir da Boys. For Britain's Sake* is patriotic, inspired by a recruiting poster. There's humour in a poem about chicken served in hospital, and another in praise of a VAD – *V.A.D. (Voluntary and Delightful)*.It isn't difficult to imagine his work finding a market in magazines and newspapers, it's fairly conventional, and reassuring. If there is suffering there is also consolation, and being remembered. He stated in his introduction.

*They pass and smile the children of the sword (I have seen that smile beautiful in death), but never from our lives they pass.*

More info:

 Poems by Benjamin Morrison.



Desert Sands 'Neath Silver Stars

Communication

Letters

Poetry

Benjamin Morrison

Jack Peterson

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