



## GWYN ALFRED WILLIAMS

1925–1995

All who heard Gwyn Alf lecture agree he was incomparable: the energy, the wit, the torrent of information and vivid insights, the sudden hesitation as he fought a stammer – then the rush to a dazzling conclusion. Born in Dowlais, he won a scholarship to Aberystwyth but joined the army in 1943, and took part in the Normandy landings and entered Paris. Later Professor in History at York University, he returned to Wales in 1974 as Professor of Welsh History at Cardiff. He wrote and lectured prolifically, and was a left-wing activist with the Communist party, the Labour Party, and Plaid Cymru. His books included *Artisans and Sans-culottes* (1968), *Goya and the Impossible Revolution* (1976), *The Merthyr Rising* (1978), and *When Was Wales?* (1985). In 1985, the riveting television series *The Dragon has Two Tongues* had Gwyn the Marxist and broadcaster Wynford Vaughan Thomas debating opposing views of Welsh history. Many other television films followed, on Mary Shelley, Sylvia Pankhurst, Pushkin, Iolo Morganwg, apartheid, John Hughes, Dowlais, and the lives of Russian coalminers, by the ‘people’s remembrancer’. He was passionate about the history and future of Wales and Merthyr. No-one in the academic world did more to illuminate the significance of our history and heritage.

Mae pawb a glywodd Gwyn Alf yn darlithio yn cytuno ei fod yn ddigymar: yr ynni, y ffraethineb, y bwrlwm o wybodaeth a chraffter byw, y saib sydyn wrth iddo frwydro i atal dweud – yna’r rhuthr i ddiweddsglo disglair. Yn enedigol o Ddowlais, enillodd ysgoloriaeth i Aberystwyth ond ymunodd â’r fyddin yn 1943, gan lanio yn Normandi, a chyrraedd Paris. Ar ôl bod yn Athro Hanes ym Mhrifysgol Efrog, dychwelodd i Gymru yn 1974 fel Athro Hanes Cymru ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd. Roedd yn awdur a darlithydd toreithiog, ac yn ymgyrchydd asgell-chwith gyda’r blaid Gomiwnyddol, y Blaid Lafur, a Phlaid Cymru. Roedd ei lyfrau’n cynnwys *Artisans and Sans-culottes* (1968), *Goya and the Impossible Revolution* (1976), *The Merthyr Rising* (1978), and *When Was Wales?* (1985). Yn 1985 aeth Gwyn y Marcsydd benben â’r darlledwr Wynford Vaughan Thomas i ddadlau am hanes Cymru yn y gyfres deledu gyfareddol, *The Dragon has Two Tongues*. Dilynodd lluo o raglenni teledu eraill, ar Mary Shelley, Sylvia Pankhurst, Pushkin, Iolo Morganwg, apartheid, John Hughes, Dowlais, a bywydau glowyr yn Rwsia, gan ‘gofiadur y bobl’. Ni phallodd ei angerdd am hanes a dyfodol Cymru a Merthyr. Wnaeth neb yn y byd academiaidd fwy i oleuo pwysigwydd ein hanes a’n treftadaeth.