

## WARTSKI, MORITZ (MORRIS) (1855 - 1946), businessman

**Name:** Moritz (Morris) Wartski  
**Date of birth:** 1855  
**Date of death:** 1946  
**Spouse:** Lily Wartski (née Lawrence)  
**Child:** Isidore Wartski  
**Child:** Charles Wartski  
**Child:** Gertrude Sions (née Wartski)  
**Child:** Harry Wartski  
**Child:** Rosie Wartski  
**Child:** Harriet Snowman (née Wartski)  
**Child:** Sarah Wartski  
**Parent:** Rosa Wartski (née Darlski)  
**Parent:** Shemaya Wartski  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** businessman  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry  
**Author:** Nathan Abrams

Morris Wartski was born in 1855 into a Jewish family in Turek, near Kalisch (Kalisz), Poland (then part of the Tsarist Russian Empire), one of three sons of Shemaya Wartski and his wife Rosa (née Darlski). Along with his brothers, Joseph and Philip, Morris emigrated to Britain. Arriving in London in 1872, he had set up a business there by 1876. By 1882, he had settled in Bangor to become a licensed peddler. He had followed his older brother, Philip, who, by the time Morris arrived, had already set up a business in Bangor, living with his wife Sarah at Parry's Terrace. *Slater's Directory* lists Joseph as a jeweller in 1883.

When he first arrived in Bangor in 1882 at the age of twenty-seven, Morris was married to Flora Callamon who was born in Ostrovo, on the border of Germany and Poland, in 1847. They had three children, Isidore (1878-1965), Charles (1879-1914) and Gertrude (1881-1923). The five of them moved in with Philip and Sarah. Philip eventually left and emigrated to South Africa where he became a retail tobacconist. Morris and Flora went on to have four more children: Harry (b. 1884), Rosie (b. 1886), Harriet (b. 1890) and Sarah (b. 1892). The 1891 census reveals that Morris (described as a jeweller and able to speak English, Welsh and German) had moved his family to a much larger house at 8 Eldon Terrace, Bangor.

Morris followed the traditional family business of travelling with his stock of silver watches, jewellery and haberdashery, offering it for sale 'to gentry and local farmers'. His brother Joseph followed the same trade from Russell Street, Liverpool, then 72 High Street, Bangor, and later at Birmingham House, Colwyn Bay. Morris became a British citizen in 1893 when he was listed as living at 21 High Street and described as a jeweller and furniture dealer. He was an observant man and the first Jewish services were held at his home on 21 January 1893 to mark the bar mitzvah of his second son Charles.

Wartski's first business premises were located at 21 High Street, Bangor, where he opened a jeweller's shop in 1895. *Slater's Directory* of that year also listed the premises as 'Wartski and Bolloten, Drapers and Clothiers'. The business was an immediate success and by 1904 the family had upgraded to a bigger property, Lluesty.

Morris built up a series of influential connections through which he became a confidant of the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler and his successor Joseph Hertz, as well as the Liberal MP and future PM, **David Lloyd George**, who became Morris's legal advisor. A sign of Morris's influence can be seen in the marriage of his daughter, Gertrude, to Joseph Sions from London in 1903. A reception for over 200 guests, including the Marquess of Anglesey who had helped Wartski to set up his business and was a customer, was held at the British Hotel in Bangor.

Morris's first wife, Flora, died suddenly in 1903, aged 56. The tributes in the *Jewish Chronicle* were fulsome, describing her as 'the most prominent and the most representative Jew in North Wales' who actively assisted her husband in all his communal and philanthropic work. It continued, 'It was largely due to her piety, hospitality and vigorous commonsense, that our community is now so highly respected and Judaism in its best form is understood by our Christian fellow-citizens.' A much respected and valued member of the congregation, she opened her doors to the poorer members of the community and visitors in what was described as the 'warm welcome of her Welsh home'.

By 1907, Morris had moved his jewellery premises to a new, much bigger, location at 202 High Street once occupied by the Star Hotel. This was listed as 'C & H Wartski' in *Bennett's Business Directory*, named after his sons Charles and Harry. The following year, he expanded the business to 33 Mostyn Street in the more prosperous and fashionable watering-place of Llandudno, and soon after opened two further shops at numbers 31 and 93.

Wartski had another reason for moving to Llandudno. At the age of sixteen, Charles had suffered a terrible injury whilst cycling from which he never fully recovered, and Wartski believed that the sea air would be of benefit to his son's health. In 1909, Wartski established Llandudno's first Synagogue in Upper Mostyn St when his daughter Harriet married London entrepreneur Emmanuel Snowman - a union that saw the business develop into an international concern when, two years later, a branch was opened in London which is still known as Wartski's of Llandudno today. In that year, Morris visited Buckingham Palace where he sold some jewellery to the King.

In 1913, Morris married Lily Lawrence who was born in London in 1868. The following year, in May 1914, Charles died, aged 35. Like his mother, he was buried at Green Lane Cemetery, Liverpool. Charles's death affected Wartski greatly and he immersed himself in community life, giving generously to local good causes. Morris Wartski died on 19 July 1946 leaving his second wife Lily who passed away just weeks later. He was buried at Long Lane Cemetery in Liverpool.

Morris was intelligent and charming. He was tall - 6'2" in height, broadly built with piercing blue eyes, a ruddy complexion and a small beard. He was an extrovert but also volatile. He was also a gifted linguist, fluent in Russian, Polish, Yiddish, German and Welsh but never lost his Polish-accented English. He lived a full and entertaining life, passing away at the age of 91. He had seven children, 15 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren. He attributed his longevity to 'plenty of whisky, good cigars and no exercise'.

### Author

Nathan Abrams

### Sources

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### Further reading

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