

## RICHARDS, JOHN (Isalaw; 1843 - 1901), musician

**Name:** John Richards  
**Pseudonym:** Isalaw  
**Date of birth:** 1843  
**Date of death:** 1901  
**Parent:** Mary Richards  
**Parent:** Richard Richards  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** musician  
**Area of activity:** Music  
**Author:** Robert David Griffith

Born 13 July 1843 at Hirael, Bangor, in a house called the King's head (a memorial tablet was placed on his house in 1931), the son of Richard and Mary Richards, the father was from Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, the mother from Llangwnadl, Caernarfonshire. After some time at the Garth British school, Bangor, he attended the Shoreland Road school, Birmingham, for two years; it was at Birmingham, under guidance from Andrew Deakin, an organist, that he began to learn music. After returning to Bangor he mastered the Tonic Sol-fa system and together with Thomas Williams, precentor at the Tabernacle C.M. chapel, formed a Tonic Sol-fa class, the first ever held in Bangor and district. An excellent penman, he rendered considerable help to composers by converting their work into script, correcting it, and preparing it for printing and publication; his services were much in demand also as a maker of illuminated addresses. He contributed articles on music to various periodicals; for *Y Cymro* he wrote a novel ('Teulu Min y Môr') which was serialized. He composed much, publishing *Caneuon Isalaw* and other works. His part-songs, especially his part-songs written to words by some hymnists (e.g. *Ieuan Glan Geirionydd*, *Ann Griffiths*), were very popular, some of them ('Bydd melus cofio y cyfamad,' 'Enaid cu, mae dyfroedd oerion') continuing so. His best-known hymn-tune is probably that called 'Sanctus.' He was working, at the request of the Liverpool Philharmonic choir, on a musical composition entitled 'The Task is Ended,' intended for Easter, 1902, but died 15 September 1901, before completing it, and was buried in Glanadda cemetery, Bangor.

### Author

**Robert David Griffith**, (1877 - 1958)

### Sources

*Y Cerddor*, April 1898 and October 1901

### Additional Links

VIAF: [73566857](#)

Wikidata: [Q28361384](#)

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