

ROBERTS, JOHN (1767 - 1834), Independent minister and theologian

Name: John Roberts
Date of birth: 1767
Date of death: 1834
Spouse: Mary Roberts (née Breese)
Child: Maria Griffith (née Roberts)
Child: Richard Roberts
Child: John Roberts
Child: Samuel Roberts
Parent: Mary Roberts (née Green)
Parent: Evan Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: Independent minister and theologian
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Richard Griffith Owen

Born 25 February 1767 at Bron-y-Ilan, Mochdre, Montgomeryshire. His parents were Evan and Mary Roberts (see under [George Roberts](#)), members of the Independent congregation at Llanbryn-mair who attended a branch chapel at Aberhafesp. When he was 18 years of age he went to live with his elder sister at Llanbryn-mair, where he became a member of the church October 1786. In January 1790 he began to preach and the following March went, at his own expense, to the North Wales Academy at Oswestry which was at that time conducted by [Edward Williams](#) (1750 - 1813), where he remained until Whit Sunday, 'trying to learn Latin.' He then worked for some time on the same subject with [Abraham Tibbott](#) at Llanuwchllyn, and after that with [Benjamin Jones](#) at Pwllheli. In January 1791 the Congregational Board (London) agreed that he should be trained at their Academy free of charge, and he was duly admitted. In 1792 the Academy, now in charge of [Jenkin Lewis](#), was moved to Wrexham where Roberts spent three years. Before finishing his course he was invited to assist [Richard Tibbott](#) at Llanbryn-mair; he began his work there January 1795 and was ordained 25 August 1796. On [Tibbott's](#) death he was elected in March 1798 to take charge of the church. In addition to that he undertook to keep a day school in a building attached to the Old Chapel, and continued this work until his eldest son, [Samuel Roberts](#) ('S.R.') came to assist him as joint minister in 1827. He lived in the chapel-house belonging to the Old Chapel until 1806, when he moved to Diosg farm, close by; here he experienced the arrogance and tyranny of the landlords and stewards of those days. However, his ministry prospered and his field of labour was extended to the furthest end of Carno and over to Llanerfyl. He succeeded to a rich inheritance in the history of Independency in this district, and made the most of his opportunities, so that it was not surprising that it came to be the 'cradle of early Independency in Wales.'

His chief interest lay in theology, not in politics, and it was not long before the country came to know of the strength of his convictions. In those days, Wales was seething with doctrinal disputes, the fiercest of which was probably that between Calvinism and Arminianism. As a disciple of [Dr. Edward Williams](#), John Roberts steered a middle course and entered the fray as an exponent of what was called the 'New System,' which held that it was not right to adopt either the Higher Calvinism on the one hand or the extremes of Arminianism on the other. In view of the stand he took, he was bitterly assailed by both parties but, as he was kind and courteous by nature, this did not perturb him. He wrote a great number of articles to the various periodicals to explain his point of view. [Thomas Jones](#) of Denbigh (1759 - 1820) entered the lists to oppose him, and, in reply, he published the book which was to become so celebrated and which was known (because of its covers) as '*The Blue Book*,' *Galwad Ddirifol ar Ymofynwyr am y Gwirionedd i Ystyried Tystiolaeth yr Ysgrhythrau ynghylch Helaethrwydd lawn Iesu Grist*. Included in this there is an appendix containing articles to the same effect by six Independent ministers who supported him. He also published *Galwad caredigol ar yr Arminiaid*; *Cyfarwyddiadau ac Anogaethau i Gredinwyr*; *A Friendly Address to the Arminians*; *Hanes Bywyd Lewis Rees*; and some other books. He died 21 July 1834, and was buried in Llanbryn-mair parish churchyard.

He had married (1797) Mary Breese, and had three sons ('S.R.', 'J.R.', and '[Gruffydd Rhisiart](#),' all separately noticed, and two daughters; '[Gohebydd](#)' was his grandson.

Author

Reverend Richard Griffith Owen, (1890 - 1973)

Sources

Samuel Roberts, *Cofiant y Parch. John Roberts, o Lanbrynmair* (Llanelli 1837)

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies* (1894), 283-4

Owen Thomas, *Cofiant y Parchedig John Jones, Talsarn: mewn cysylltiad a hanes duwinyddiaeth a phregethu Cymru* (Wrexham 1874)

Rhyddweithiau Hiraethog sef, casgliad o weithiau llenyddol

Glanmor Williams, *Samuel Roberts, Llanbrynmair* (Cardiff 1950)

Jonathan Jones, *Cofiant y Parch. Thomas Jones o Ddinbych, yn cynnwys ei gyssylltiad a duwinyddiaeth a llenyddiaeth ei oes, a hanes a symudiadau y Methodistiaid*

Calfinaidd, ac a'r ordeiniad cyntaf a fu ar eu gweinidogion yn y flwyddyn 1811, gyda deg ar hugain o ddarluniau (Dinbych 1897), 290, 295-301, 322-3

Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru, i, 253-8

Album Aberhonddu â€¦ o'r flwyddyn 1755 hyd 1880 (1898), 41-2

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [Llawysgrifau S.R. a J.R.](#)

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