

ROBERTS, ROBERT ALUN (1894 - 1969), Professor of Agricultural Botany at University College, Bangor, and a naturalist

Name: Robert Alun Roberts
Date of birth: 1894
Date of death: 1969
Spouse: Jennie Roberts (née Williams)
Parent: Jane Roberts (née Thomas)
Parent: Robert Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: Professor of Agricultural Botany at University College, Bangor, and a naturalist
Area of activity: Education; Nature and Agriculture; Science and Mathematics
Author: Melfyn Richard Williams

Born 10 March 1894, at Glan Gors, Tan'rallt, Dyffryn Nantlle, Caernarfonshire, son of Robert Roberts (brother of Owen Roberts, father of [Dr. Kate Roberts](#)) and Jane Thomas. He received his primary education at Nebo school and won a scholarship to Pen-y-groes county school. For a period, he was a pupil teacher before securing a place in University College, Bangor in 1911. He was awarded a B.Sc. with honours in 1915 and completed his Ph.D. in 1927. His first appointment was as a science teacher at Botwnnog school (1915-17). He served with the Ministry of Agriculture from 1917 to 1919, and later as an agricultural botany consultant for the Ministry until 1921 when he was appointed to a lectureship in the Agricultural Botany department in the University College, Bangor. In 1926, he was promoted independent lecturer and head of the college's Agricultural Botany department. Between 1941 and 1944 he was seconded from his college post to become an administrative officer with the Ministry of Agriculture in Caernarfonshire. For a short period in 1944-45 he was one of His Majesty's Inspectors for rural schools, and this experience enabled him to contribute to the 1944 Education Act. In July 1945 he returned to University College of North Wales, Bangor and was appointed the first Professor of Agricultural Botany. He held this post until his retirement in 1960.

Alun Roberts worked diligently to establish a strong department in Bangor and developed his own incomparable style of imparting knowledge to his students. He contributed numerous articles and papers to scientific journals. For a decade he lectured on biological topics in tutorial courses and he and [R.E.V. Roberts](#) were the first members of the panel of naturalists on a well-known radio programme, *Byd Natur*. His wide knowledge of Wales led to many requests to serve on a host of national bodies and commissions such as the management committee of the Welsh National Folk Museum; the Agricultural Council for Wales; the council of the Wales Forestry Commission (1946-53); the Lord Carrington Council on Agricultural Education; he was first chairman of the Nature Conservancy (1953-56); the Welsh member of the Royal Commission on Common Land (1955-58); a member of the Nuffield Foundation team researching into Common Land in Wales and of the Water Resources Committee for Wales. From 1955-56 he was High Sheriff for the county of Caernarfon. In recognition of his contribution to agriculture he received a C.B.E. in 1962. He was to be awarded an honorary D.Litt. in July 1969 but died in the Caernarfon and Anglesey Hospital on 19 May 1969. His ashes were scattered on the slopes of the Cymffyrch, a stone's throw from his old home.

He was the author of numerous books, e.g. *Y tir a'i gynnyrch; Hafodydd brithion; Welsh Homespun; Y tyddynnwr-chwarelwr yn Nyffryn Nantlle* (Pen-y-groes Library Annual Lecture, 1968); *Yr elfen fugelliol ym mywyd Cymru* (Radio Lecture, 1968) and co-author of *Commons and Village Green* (1967).

He married Jennie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Morris Williams, Cae Mawr, Tan'rallt, in 1924, and they had one daughter.

Author

Melfyn Richard Williams

Sources

Who's who?, 1969

Y Gwyddonydd, 2 (1964)

Melfyn R. Williams, *Doctor Alun Bywyd a gwaith yr Athro R. Alun Roberts* (Talybont 1977)

personal information

his manuscripts in the Library, University of Wales, Bangor (MSS 20811-21046)

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