

ROBERTS, GLYN (1904 - 1962), historian and administrator

Name: Glyn Roberts
Date of birth: 1904
Date of death: 1962
Spouse: Caryl Eryl Roberts (née Hughes)
Spouse: Mary Davida Alwynne Roberts (née Hughes)
Parent: Ann Roberts
Parent: William Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: historian and administrator
Area of activity: Education; History and Culture; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: John Gwynn Williams

Born 31 August 1904 at Bangor, Caernarfonshire, son of William and Ann Roberts, and educated at Friars School from 1915 to 1922 when he won a scholarship to the University College of North Wales, Bangor. He studied history under [John Edward Lloyd](#) and Arthur Herbert Dodd and graduated with first-class honours in 1925. He undertook research into the parliamentary history of the north Wales boroughs from 1535-1832 and in 1929 was awarded an M.A. as well as the Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd prize for his thesis which reveals the influence of Lewis Namier. In the same year he was appointed assistant lecturer at University College, Swansea where he remained until 1939 when he joined the Civil Service. By 1942 he was an assistant secretary in the Ministry of Supply and in 1944 was promoted deputy head of the mission to the U.S.A. to secure raw materials to meet the needs of Britain. A glittering career as a Government administrator lay ahead, but he decided to return to his old college in Bangor as Registrar. He played an indispensable part in the post-war reorganisation of the college and the number of students increased substantially. In 1949, on the retirement of [Robert Thomas Jenkins](#), the college in its wisdom invited him to fill the chair of Welsh History. However, he was in no way released from frequent administrative demands - he was dean of the faculty and vice-principal for two years on both occasions - and outside the college he was chairman of the University of Wales History and Law Committee of the Board of Celtic Studies and also of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society, a member of the council of the Historical Buildings of Wales and of the executive committee formed to advise the Master of the Rolls on the policy to be adopted when publishing public records. Despite such demands, he devoted himself more and more to his main subject and gradually his interests extended back from the eighteenth century to the Tudor period (at one time it was his intention to produce a volume on this period for *Cyfres y Brifysgol a'r Werin*), and eventually to the late Middle Ages. The difficult and troubled years post 1282 - with their compromise, submissiveness and co-operation on the one hand, rejection, challenge and rebellion on the other - held a special attraction for him. His publications on these complexities, ones which brilliantly illuminate the background of the Tudor dynasty, are his most mature contribution to this topic and provide a foretaste of the masterpiece which would have resulted had he lived. After his death a collection of his main articles was published under the title *Aspects of Welsh History* (1969).

Glyn Roberts possessed an incisive and analytical mind which led him patiently to unravel all complex problems before arriving at the heart of the matter and, in great measure, this accounted for his success as a teacher and administrator. He understood the motives of his fellow man better than most and detested over-respectability and affectation. Full of humour and a lover of amusing tales and ready witticisms he was fundamentally a likeable, gracious and kindly man.

Married twice (1): Mary Davida Alwynne Hughes on 6 September 1933, and after her death (2): her sister, Caryl Eryl Hughes on 28 July 1954. He died 13 August 1962 in Menai Bridge and was buried in Llantysilio churchyard, Anglesey.

Author

Professor John Gwynn Williams

Sources

A. H. Dodd and J. Gwynn Williams (eds.), *Aspects of Welsh History* (1969) (1969) and the sources named there
Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions, 1963
personal knowledge

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