

ROBERTS, EVAN JOHN (1878 - 1951), 'Y Diwygiwr' (the Revivalist) revivalist preacher

Name: Evan John Roberts
Pseudonym: Y Diwygiwr, The Revivalist
Date of birth: 1878
Date of death: 1951
Parent: Hannah Roberts
Parent: Henry Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: revivalist preacher
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Gomer Morgan Roberts

Born 8 June 1878 at Island House, Bwlchmynydd, Loughor, Glamorganshire, son of Henry and Hannah Roberts. He worked as a coalminer at Loughor and Mountain Ash when he was young, and became apprenticed to a blacksmith in 1902. He was an exceptionally gifted young man, attaining a high standard of culture through self-discipline. He had spiritual experiences at times, and he confessed to having prayed for thirteen years for a religious revival in Wales. At the close of 1903 he began to preach in Moriah, Loughor, and he was accepted as a candidate for the ministry by the Presbyterian Church of Wales. At the end of September 1904 he entered the school kept by John Phillips, Newcastle Emlyn, to prepare himself for the ministry. Religious life was being awoken in south Cardiganshire at the time, following a series of conferences, similar to the Keswick conferences, which had been arranged by [Joseph Jenkins](#) (1859 - 1929) and others to deepen the spiritual life of the churches. Evan Roberts had an experience that shook him to the core at one of these conferences (at Blaenannerch), and he was induced to return to Loughor to hold a mission before the end of October. Agitated meetings were held in the Loughor district, and in a short time - between November 1904 and January 1906 - a powerful religious awakening spread throughout Wales. He was the most prominent figure of the 1904-05 Revival (as it is called). Some leading personalities vigorously criticised him, and no doubt he did make some mistakes in the emotional heat of events and infectious enthusiasm of the meetings. He himself was absolutely sincere, and the stresses and strains of these months proved too much for him.

It is difficult to estimate the effect and influence of the Revival. Church membership increased enormously everywhere, and a new generation of leaders and ministers was raised in the churches. The awakening spread to other parts of Britain, and to the missionary fields as well. There were splits in some circles, one result being the formation of new religious bodies, such as the Apostolic Church, the 'foursquare' Eilm movement, and Pentecostal causes. The effects lasted a long time in some circles, although World War I counteracted them and extinguished them to some degree. Some of the effects can be traced down to the charismatic movements of more recent times. Some believe that the Revival also affected the growth of the young Labour movement between 1904 and 1914.

In 1906, fatigued and physically weak, Evan Roberts was cared for by Mrs Jessie Penn-Lewis, at her home in Leicester, and he also lived in London for a brief period. He retired from public view, though he took part occasionally at meetings in Wales during the period 1925-30. He received the succour of friends in Porthcawl, and in Rhiwbina, Cardiff, and he died there 29 January 1951. He was buried in the family grave in Moriah, Loughor. A monument to him in front of Moriah chapel was unveiled in 1953.

During his early period Evan Roberts composed many poems and hymns, a selection of which is to be found in his biography. A collection of his hymns was published in Aberdare in 1905, and when he lived in Leicester he published a booklet, *Gwasanaeth a milwriaeth ysbrydol* (1912).

Author

Reverend Gomer Morgan Roberts, (1904 - 1993)

Sources

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S. Evans and G. M. Roberts (eds.), *Cyfrol Goffa Diwygiad 1904-1905* (Caernarfon 1954) (1954), which includes a bibliography of the Revivalist and the Revival

Eifion Evans, *The Welsh revival of 1904* (1969) (1969)

E. Morgan Humphreys, *Gwyr Enwog Gynt argraffiadau ac atgofion personol (yr ail gyfres)* (Aberystwyth 1953), 100-9

Further Reading

Brynmor Pierce Jones, *An instrument of revival: the complete life of Evan Roberts (1878-1951)* (New Jersey 1995)

Brynmor Pierce Jones, *Voices from the Welsh revival: an anthology of testimonies, reports, and eyewitness statements from Wales's year of blessing, 1904-05* (Bridgend 1995)

Noel Gibbard, *Fire on the altar: a history and evaluation of the 1904-05 Revival in Wales* (Bridgend 2005)

Wikipedia Article: [Evan Roberts](#)

Additional Links

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