

## ROBERTS, EMRYS OWEN (1910-1990), Liberal politician and public servant

**Name:** Emrys Owen Roberts

**Date of birth:** 1910

**Date of death:** 1990

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** Liberal politician and public servant

**Area of activity:** Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration

**Author:** John Graham Jones

He was born at Caernarfon on 22 September 1910, the son of Owen Owens Roberts and Mary Grace Williams, both natives of Caernarfon. He was educated at Caernarfon Grammar School, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (1st class honours in law in 1931 and the Sir Samuel T. Evans Prize) and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (1st class honours in both Part I and Part II of the Law Tripos, MA). He became a solicitor in 1936 and was awarded the Clements Inn Prize. He also attended the Geneva School of International Law. He was a Gold Medallist of the Cambridge and Wales Law Societies. He served in the RAF, 1941-45, where he became a squadron leader. He was called to the bar from Grays Inn in 1944. He was made MBE in 1946 and CBE in 1976.

Emrys Roberts had been short-listed as the Liberal candidate for the Caernarfon Boroughs constituency (Lloyd George's old seat) in the 1945 by-election. He was soon to be elected Liberal MP for Merionethshire in the general election of 1945 as successor to Sir Henry Haydn Jones MP, and he continued to serve until defeated by the Labour candidate, T.W. Jones, in the general election of October 1951. He held a large number of directorships in various commercial companies. He was President of the National League of Young Liberals, 1946-48, and of the Liberal Party of Wales, 1949-51. He was a member of the Council of Europe, 1950-51. He was a member of parliamentary delegations to Germany, Yugoslavia, Romania and Sweden. Although Emrys Roberts was MP for Merionethshire for only six years, his fellow MPs were impressed from the outset by the sharpness of his intellect and his conspicuous radical leanings. He focused on European affairs, the economy and Welsh affairs. Much of his time was inevitably taken up with internal party discussions on the political direction which the Liberals might take. Roberts generally shared the view of Lady Megan Lloyd George (Anglesey) and Dingle Foot (Dundee) that it should lean more to the left. In this view he tended to be at odds with his more right-wing friends and neighbours, Clement Davies (Montgomeryshire) and Roderic Bowen (Cardiganshire). His defeat in 1951 was a harsh blow to a hard-working constituency MP. It was widely believed that Plaid Cymru had withdrawn their candidate as a tactical manoeuvre to facilitate a Labour victory at the election and thus allow Gwynfor Evans, the party president, a straight fight against a sitting Labour MP in future general elections. Most nationalists, it was said, had voted Labour in 1951 in order to defeat Emrys Roberts.

Roberts was also the chairman of the National Eisteddfod Council, 1964-67, and a member of the Council on the Legal Status of the Welsh Language in the Law Courts. He served on the Duke of Norfolk's Investiture Committee in 1969. He was a member of the Mid-Wales Development Corporation, 1969-77, and its chairman in 1977, a member of the Welsh Development Agency, 1977-81, and director of the Development Corporation of Wales, 1978-81. He brought to these positions a creative mind and considerable professional and political skills. He was a member of the court and council of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1972-85, and the chairman of the Council of the National Eisteddfod of Wales, 1964-67 and its hon. counsel, 1957-74. He proved an extremely businesslike and progressive chairman of the council of the National Eisteddfod. He published jointly *The Law of Restrictive Trade Practices and Monopolies*. He married Anna Elizabeth Tudor in 1948, and they had one son and one daughter. The son, Owen, predeceased his father. They lived at Bryn Dedwydd, Dolgellau, at Court House, Basil Street, London, and 8 Kent House, 62 Holland Park Avenue, London W11. His papers are at the National Library of Wales. He died on 29 October 1990.

### Author

Dr John Graham Jones

### Sources

*Who was who?*

*Etholiadau'r Ganrif / Welsh Elections 1885-1997* (Talybont 1999)

*Welsh Hustings - 1885-2004* (Ammanford 2005)

*Dod's Parliamentary Companion*

*The Times*, 3 November 1990

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