

ROBERTS family, of Mynydd-y-gof, Bodedern, Anglesey

DAVID ROBERTS (1788? - 1869), physician

The son of John and Catherine Roberts of Abergallw, Llanfachraeth; the origins of the family were in Llanddeusant parish. David Roberts was apprenticed with a physician at Holyhead; after assisting a physician in London for a while, he returned to Anglesey to practise (and to farm) at Mynydd-y-gof. In 1815 he married Sarah Foulkes (1788 - 1879), daughter of [Thomas Foulkes](#) of Machynlleth, and niece of [Simon Lloyd](#) of Bala. Fortified by this dynastic connection with Methodism, he became, long before his death, the chief Calvinistic Methodist elder in Anglesey; a serious man, frugal though not miserly, somewhat autocratic - in a way an incarnation of the rather dour older Methodism of the island. He died 12 January 1869, 'in his 81st year' says his son Robert, and was buried at Llanfachraeth. He had a large family, of ten children ([J. E. Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 383 - but the order of the children is there incorrectly given), of whom eight sons grew to maturity (*Y Drysorfa*, 1870, 428-9 and 466-9, and the volume *Mynydd-y-gof*). Three of the sons call for notice:

JOHN FOULKES ROBERTS (1817 - 1902), merchant

The second son. He went to Manchester in 1838; later on, he and his brother Hugh founded the prosperous firm 'J. F. and H. Roberts.' Like his father, he was extremely conscientious, took Samuel Smiles as his mentor, and strove after self-culture (e.g. he learned some Greek). He showed no zeal for the Welsh language, and indeed joined an English Congregational church, but was not behind-hand in supporting Welsh interests at Manchester. Over and above this, he took a prominent part in the public life of the city, and was lord mayor in 1896-7. He was a zealous promoter of higher education in Wales, and from the foundation of University College, Aberystwyth, till his own death - a period of thirty years - he was one of its vice-presidents. [It may now be added that the recent publication of the *Thomas Charles Edwards Letters* (ed. [T. I. Ellis](#), 1952-3) has brought into fuller light his inestimably valuable services to the college in very critical days.] He died 5 November 1902. (*Mynydd-y-gof*; obituary notices in the press.) His son,

FREDERICK CHARLES ROBERTS (1862 - 1894), medical missionary

A Congregationalist by upbringing, he was educated at Manchester grammar school, at Aberystwyth College, and at Edinburgh, graduating there in medicine. In 1887 he went to China, at first to assist James Gilmour in Mongolia, but settling afterwards in Tien-tsin, where he died in June 1894; his sister MARY ROBERTS had joined him there in 1888 - afterwards she took charge of the hospital named after her brother, and died in 1933 [Bryson,].

ROBERT ROBERTS (1828 - 1916), business-man

The sixth son, also a Manchester business-man; he launched out on his own there in 1855, but closed his business down c. 1870, and from that time till his retirement in 1885 acted as an agent. He is nothing like as well known as his two brothers who are noticed here, but was in some ways a more interesting man - notably as reflected in his privately-printed book *Mynydd-y-gof, or the History of a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Family* (1905, under the significant pseudonym 'A Lax'), to which the present notice owes much. It is not only an autobiography and a family history but also a valuable account of Anglesey Methodism and its leaders during the first half of the 19th century - and also of Welsh life in Manchester. He died 28 January 1916 (information from his grand-daughter, Mrs. Bulman).

Syr WILLIAM ROBERTS (1830 - 1899), physician

The eighth of the sons. He went to Mill Hill school and University College, London, graduating in 1851 (M.D., 1854), and afterwards studied in Paris and Berlin; he was elected F.R.S. in 1877 [and knighted in 1885]. He settled at Manchester in 1854, was chief physician of the Royal Infirmary there from 1855 till 1883, and was from 1863 till [1873 lecturer, and from 1873 till] 1889 professor of medicine at Owens College (later the Victoria University). In 1889 he removed to London. He received almost every honour that can be conferred by the medical profession. He specialized in kidney diseases, but made important contributions in other fields, notably in physiology. For twenty years before his death he had owned the estate of Bryn in Llan-ym-Mawddwy, Meirionnydd, and used it as a summer retreat; there he died 16 April 1899, and was buried in the churchyard. (*D.N.B. First Supplement*; *Mynydd-y-gof*; *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1932-3, with a list of his papers.)

Author

Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881 - 1969)

Further Reading

Ionawryn Williams, *Geiriadur Bywgraffiadol, yn cynnwys Byr-hanes y Cymry mwyaf adnabyddus fuont yn preswyllo yn Manceinion* (1896)

Wikipedia Article: [John Foulkes Roberts](#)

Further Reading

R. Roberts, *Mynydd-y-gof or the History of a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist family* (London 1905)

Delweddau

Thomas Edwin Mostyn, [John Foulkes Roberts](#)

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