

ROBERTS, ROBERT DAVIES (1851 - 1911), pioneer in adult education and scientist

Name: Robert Davies Roberts
Date of birth: 1851
Date of death: 1911
Spouse: Mary Roberts (née King)
Parent: Sara Roberts (née Davies)
Parent: Richard Davies Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: pioneer in adult education and scientist
Area of activity: Education; Science and Mathematics
Author: Benjamin Bowen Thomas

Born 5 March 1851, at Aberystwyth, eldest son of Richard Davies Roberts, timber merchant, and Sara Davies. Educated locally and at Oswestry, the Liverpool Institute, University College, London (B.Sc., 1st class in geology, 1870, D.Sc., 1878), Clare College, Cambridge (2nd class natural sciences tripos., 1875), he was (1876-7) temporary lecturer at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; Cambridge University extension lecturer (1878-81); assistant secretary, Cambridge University Committee for local lectures (1881-94); Fellow of Clare College and University lecturer in geology (1884); secretary London Society for Extension of University Teaching (1886); secretary of the Gilchrist Trust; and editor of *The University Extension Journal* (1889). He was the author of *Earth's History: An Introduction to Geology*, 1893. He was secretary of the Cambridge Syndicate for University extension lecturers (1894-1902) and registrar of the external side of the University of London (1902-11). He married (1888) Mary King, of Brighton, and died 11 November 1911 at Kensington.

Roberts believed that adult education should be an integral part of the education system of England and Wales, that the Universities should assume this responsibility, and that their numbers should be increased to enable them to discharge it. He was an outstanding figure in adult education, advocating, leading, and experimenting. Each University should have one constituent college for the further education of non-resident students, authorised to award certificates, diplomas, and degrees covering all university subjects. His emphasis on advanced and written work prepared the way for the tutorial class. He organised 'summer schools'; he advocated 'Mature Matriculation' and adult scholarships at universities, and the representation of non-academic interests on university extension boards. He strove to extend public libraries and settlements such as Toynbee Hall. Towards the end of his life he was not in step with new developments associated with Trade Unions, the Co-operative Movement, and the Workers' Educational Association. As a scholar and experienced administrator he helped to establish the University of Wales. He was junior deputy chancellor in 1903 and chairman of its executive committee in 1911.

Author

Sir Benjamin Bowen Thomas, (1899 - 1977)

Sources

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id., *University Extension under the old and new Conditions*

id., articles in *Y Traethodydd*, 1889 (March), *The Education Review*, vii, *University Extension Congress, London, 1894. Report of the Proceedings, etc* (London 1894), 1894, *Transactions of the Liverpool Welsh National Society*, 1898

B. B. Thomas, 'R. D. Roberts in Adult Education' in *Harlech Studies. Essays presented to Dr. Jones, Thomas* (Cardiff 1938)

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Published date: 1959

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