

ROBERTS, JOHN (Alaw Elwy, also called 'Telynor Cymru'; 1816 - 1894), harpist

Name: John Roberts
Pseudonym: Alaw Elwy, Telynor Cymru
Date of birth: 1816
Date of death: 1894
Spouse: Eleanor Alabama (née Wood Jones)
Child: Mary Ann Wood (née Roberts)
Child: Sarah Wood (née Roberts)
Child: Ann Roberts
Child: Lloyd Wynne Roberts
Child: Abraham Roberts
Child: Madoc Roberts
Child: John Roberts
Child: James England Roberts
Child: Reuben France Roberts
Child: Albert Roberts
Child: Ernest Roberts
Child: Charles Roberts
Child: William Roberts
Parent: Sarah Lewis (née Wood)
Parent: John Robert Lewis
Gender: Male
Occupation: harpist
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts
Author: Robert David Griffith

Born at Rhiwlas Isaf, Llanrhaeadr, near Denbigh, the son of John Roberts, Pentrefoelas, a ballad-singer who had been at the battle of Waterloo, and is said to have been a cousin of the almanack-maker [John Roberts](#) (1731 - 1806). His mother, Sarah, was the daughter of [William Wood](#), and the sister of [Archelaus Wood](#).

He started his career in the 23rd Regiment ('Royal Welch Fusiliers') where he stayed nine and a half years. He then settled at Newtown, Montgomeryshire, and remained there for the rest of his life.

In 1836 he married Eleanor Wood Jones, daughter of [Jeremiah Wood Jones](#), harpist at Gogerddan for half a century.

A pupil of [Richard Roberts](#) (1796 - 1855), a Caernarvon harpist, he became a noted harpist and a skilled singer of penillion to the accompaniment of the harp. He won the triple harp offered at the Abergavenny eisteddfod, 1842, taking the chief

prize in 1848 also. He also won the harp at the Cardiff eisteddfod of 1850. He played before the queen at Portsmouth in 1834 and at Winchester (twice) in 1835; he also played before grand duke Constantine of Russia at Aberystwyth (1847), and the king of Belgium at Swansea in 1848. He taught nine of his children to play the harp, the violin, and the flute, and they gave a concert before queen Victoria at Pale, Meirionnydd, when she visited that house in 1889. Four years previously (1885) he had given up calling himself Alaw Elwy on being invested by [Gwilym Cowlyd](#) as 'Telynor Cymru' in a bardic 'gorsedd' held on the shores of Llyn Geirionnydd (1886).

He died 11 May 1894. He was a fluent Romany -speaker.

Author

Robert David Griffith, (1877 - 1958)

Sources

M. O. Jones, *Bywgraffiaeth Cerddorion Cymreig* (1890)

Nicholas Bennett, *Alawon fy Ngwlad* (1896)

R. Griffith, *Llyfr Cerdd Dannau* (1913)

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies* (1894)

Further reading

Romani Cymru / Romany Wales Project [The Roberts Tribe](#)

Wyn Thomas, [John Roberts: 'Telynor Cymru' 1816-1894](#), *Welsh Music History*, 1, 1996, pp.172-179

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [John Roberts \('Telynor Cymru'\) Papers](#)

VIAF: [18491215](#)

Wikidata: [Q28361398](#)

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