

ROBERTS, JOHN (1842 - 1908), Calvinistic Methodist missionary

Name: John Roberts
Date of birth: 1842
Date of death: 1908
Spouse: Sidney Margaret Roberts (née Jones)
Parent: Jane Roberts
Parent: Richard Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: Calvinistic Methodist missionary
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Dorothy Elwyn Forrester

Born 16 February 1842 at Gwyngyll, Upper Corris, Meirionnydd, son of Richard Roberts, stonemason (member of a family called Ffowc, farmers of Plas Meifod, Henllan, Denbighshire) and his wife Jane, of Egryn, Dyffryn Ardudwy. On the death of his father John went, at the age of 11, to work in the quarry, but he had already secretly resolved to be a missionary : he saved up to buy books, hiding them in the stone stool on which he sat to split slates. The Revival of 1859 influenced him deeply and, at the age of 21, he began to preach, having been a pupil, since 1860, of the British school at Garnedd Wen under Humphrey Owen. He entered Bala Calvinistic Methodist College in 1866 and four years later was accepted as a candidate for the mission field in Assam. He then pursued a short course of study, mainly medical, in Edinburgh, and on 6 January 1871 was ordained at Salem, Dolgelley. On 31 May of that year he married Sidney Margaret, daughter of [Thomas Jones](#) (Glan Alun), a true fellow-worker. They sailed for India on 27 September 1871, settling first in Shella, but moving to Cherrapoonjee five years later. As a pioneer Roberts undertook long and dangerous journeys to preach the gospel, gave medical relief to thousands, established and conducted schools, and founded the Cherra Theological College, of which he became principal. An excellent linguist, he took a major part, with his wife's help, in revising the existing translation of the New Testament, in translating the Old, and in seeing the whole new Khasi *Bible* through the press (1897). He also translated the *Pilgrim's Progress* and over seventy-three Welsh hymns, taking especial delight, with his fine tenor voice, in teaching Welsh hymn-tunes in harmony to the Khassis, who had no music of their own. During his furlough, he was elected moderator of the Calvinistic Methodist General Assembly (1897), but before he occupied the chair a devastating earthquake in Khassia hastened his return to help his people. He was, however, moderator at the Assembly held in 1907. The torrential rainy season of 1908 coincided with a serious cholera epidemic in Cherra. Though far from well, John Roberts fought it relentlessly and without mercy on himself. This and the absence of surgical aid brought about his untimely death on 23 July 1908 after a few days' illness. Mrs. Roberts survived him (she died at Bangor, Caernarfonshire, 9 February 1931).

Author

Dorothy Elwyn Forrester

Sources

R. J. Williams, *Y Parchedig John Roberts, D.D., Khasia* (Caernarfon 1923)

letters from Dr. and Mrs. Roberts in *Y Drysorfa* and other connexional papers

J. Hughes Morris, *Hanes Cenhadaeth Dramor y Methodistiaid Califinaidd Cymreig hyd ddiwedd y flwyddyn 1904* (Caernarfon 1907)

annual reports of the C.M. Missionary Society

personal knowledge

Further reading

Dafydd Andrew Jones, *From Corris to Cherra: the life and work of the Rev. Dr. John Roberts 1842-1908* (Shillong 2017)

Additional Links

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