

ROBERTS, THOMAS (1765-6 - 1841), of Llwyn'rhudol, pamphleteer


Name: Thomas Roberts
Date of birth: 1765-6
Date of death: 1841
Spouse: Mary Roberts
Child: Keturah Roberts
Child: Maurice Roberts
Parent: Jane Roberts
Parent: William Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: pamphleteer
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Printing and Publishing; Religion
Author: David Williams

He was the son of William Roberts, attorney-at-law, of Llwyn'rhudol, Aber-erch, near Pwllheli, and of Jane, his wife. He was christened 'with private baptism' on 16 August 1767, but as he is stated to have been 76 when he died, on 24 May 1841, it would appear that he was born either in 1765 or in 1766. His father was buried on 16 January 1778.

Thomas Roberts states that before he was 14 years old (that is, within a year of his father's death) he left home for London. He was probably apprenticed to a goldsmith, and later he set up in business on his own account. There is extant a receipt, dated 21 January 1795, for payment to him by the Gwyneddigion Society for supplying 'a handsome engraved copper plate to order.' In 1802 he was a partner in the firm of Weatherby and Roberts, goldsmiths, of 9 Poultry, and in 1805 in the firm of Thomas and R. J. Roberts of 40 Poultry. Later, however, he was in the service of another firm, and in 1820 he visited Jersey as its representative. On this occasion he visited Brittany at the expense of Richard Edmunds, treasurer of the Welsh School, London. In the next year he went as the firm's representative to Ghent, and stayed until the beginning of 1823.

It is known that his wife's name was Mary, and that she was a native of Warwickshire and was a member of the Society of Friends. It is not certain whether Thomas Roberts became a Quaker. A daughter was born in October 1791. The eldest son, MAURICE ROBERTS, who had translated *Dafydd Benfras's awdl* to *Llywelyn ap Iorwerth*, died at the age of 20 in December 1812. In all, four children died before their mother's death in March 1829 (she was buried on 5 April in Bunhill Fields) leaving one daughter, Keturah, still alive. She was a perfumer, in business at 7, Bond Street, and it was there that her father died. He was buried on 30 May 1841 in Bunhill Fields.

Thomas Roberts became a member of the Gwyneddigion Society in 1793, was elected vice-president in 1799, president in 1800, and treasurer in 1801. He seems to have resigned his membership for a time but was president again in 1808. He became the society's secretary in 1814, but resigned in 1820, although he resumed this office for a year in 1826. He remained afterwards an active member of the society, being a member of its council as late as 1833. He was one of the twelve founder-members of the Cymreigyddion (the first minutes of the society are dated 17 November 1796) and was probably responsible for its foundation.

He published *Cwyn yn erbyn Gorthrymder*  (London, 1798), a satirical pamphlet mainly directed against the payment of tithes. He was not a Calvinist but, under the name of 'Arvonius,' he published *Amddiffyniad y Methodistiaid* (Carmarthen, 1806) against the attacks of *Edward Charles*. Later he produced *An English and Welsh Vocabulary* (London, 1827), and a phrase book, *The Welsh Interpreter* (London, 1831, second edition, 1838). He also published (n.d.) *Y Byd a Ddaw*, a re-issue of a translation by *W. E. Jones* (Gwilym Cawrdaf) of a work by Isaac Watts, which had appeared in 1829, and *Y Ffordd i Gaffael Cyfoeth neu Rhisiart Druan* (London, 1839), which is based on Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard*. It is unlikely that he was the Thomas Roberts who published *Stenographia* (Denbigh, 1839), a system of Welsh shorthand. [He often contributed to the Welsh newspapers and periodicals of the period, in both languages].

Author

Emeritus Professor David Williams, (1900 - 1978)

Sources

Information from the prize-winning essays at the Pwllheli national eisteddfod, 1925, by Richard Jones, Aberystwyth, and Robert Owen, Croesor

Y Cymmrodor, 1951, 110-2, 132-3

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