

ROBERTS, THOMAS (Scorpion; 1816 - 1887), Independent minister

Name: Thomas Roberts
Pseudonym: Scorpion
Date of birth: 1816
Date of death: 1887
Parent: Harri Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: Independent minister
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Richard Griffith Owen

Born at Denbigh, christened 25 August 1816, the son of Harry Roberts, a self-educated man of parts who had served nearly twenty years as a soldier. In his early days Scorpion's educational opportunities were limited; he attended a school kept by **Caledfryn** (William Williams) in the local Calvinistic Methodist chapel but we gather that his principal teacher was his father; he had lost his mother when he was only 12 years of age. He was, for a time, a blacksmith's apprentice.

In 1837 **Gwilym Hiraethog** (William Rees) became minister of the church at Swan Lane, Denbigh, and discovered that Scorpion had the necessary qualifications for the ministry. That summer Scorpion began to preach. In 1839 he went to the Rev. D. W. Jones of Holywell to be coached before entering college. In December 1841, as there was no vacancy for him at Brecon College, he went to Llanuwchllyn, where he became one of the first students of the academy founded by **Michael Jones** which, in November 1842, moved to Bala and later became known as the Bala Independent College. About Christmas 1842 he turned once more towards Brecon and walked the whole way there in the depths of winter - an indication of the diligence and determination which characterised him through out his life. He worked hard in college, and soon acquired a reputation as a writer on the score of his articles in *Y Dysgedydd* and in *Yr Haul* (edited by **Brutus**, who gave him every opportunity of gibing at Stigginses and dictatorial elders, whom **Brutus** referred to respectively as 'Jacks' and 'Lords'). It is said that at this time he was inclined to join the Established Church, and it is possible that this was a result of his connection with **Brutus**. It was at this time, too, that he began to make use of the pseudonym 'Scorpion.'

In 1846 he was invited to succeed **Michael Jones** at 'Hen Gapel' church, Llanuwchllyn. The years he spent there were very prolific; he kept a day school which took the place of the **Dr Williams's** school which **Michael Jones** had moved to Bala, and he used to go as far afield as Rhyd-y-main to hold classes in literature. In November 1848 an article of his published in *Y Dysgedydd* under the title 'Ocheneidiau'r Weinidogaeth' ('The Groans of the Ministry') caused an uproar throughout the country. He was ferociously attacked and, if possible, even more ferociously defended by his former co-student, **Ieuan Gwynedd**. Scorpion, like other Independent leaders of that period, was also a political dissenter. He took a prominent part at Llan-uwchllyn in the campaign against the tithes. In 1856 he moved to Trelawnyd (Newmarket), Flintshire, and in 1858 to Llanrwst.

He resigned in 1881, and died 12 June 1887; he was buried in S. Mary's churchyard, Llanrwst.

He published *Esboniad Cyflawn ar y Testament Newydd, Testament Daearyddol, Gwaith Barddonol Ieuan Gwynedd, Cofiant H. Pugh, Mostyn* (joint editor), *Cofiant Caledfryn*; and he had begun a memoir of **Gwilym Hiraethog**, which was completed by **David Roberts** (1818 - 1897).

Author

Reverend Richard Griffith Owen, (1890 - 1973)

Sources

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- W. R. Owen, *Scorpion*, *Y Dysgedydd*, Medi 1889, 343-348
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- W. R. Owen, *Scorpion*, *Y Dysgedydd*, Chwefror 1895, 55-60
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Works

Thomas Roberts, David Roberts, *Cofiant y Parch. W. Rees, D.D. (Gwilym Hiraethog)*(Dolgellau 1893)

O. Gethin Jones, William John Roberts, Thomas Roberts, E. Humphreys (eds.), *Gweithiau Gethin sef casgliad o holl weithiau barddonol a llenyddol* (Llanrwst 1884)

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Wikidata: Q28361417

Published date: 1959

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Owen, R. G., (1959). ROBERTS, THOMAS (Scorpion; 1816 - 1887), Independent minister. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 23 Aug 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s-ROBE-THO-1816>

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