

ROBERTS, WILLIAM (Nefydd; 1813 - 1872), Baptist minister, printer, author, eisteddfodwr, South Wales representative of the British and Foreign Schools Society, etc.

**Name:** William Roberts

**Pseudonym:** Nefydd

**Date of birth:** 1813

**Date of death:** 1872

**Spouse:** Jane Roberts (née Jones)

**Parent:** Anne Roberts

**Parent:** Robert Roberts

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** Baptist minister, printer, author, eisteddfodwr, South Wales representative of the British and Foreign Schools Society

**Area of activity:** Education; Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing; Religion

**Author:** William Llewelyn Davies

Born 8 March 1813 in Bryngoleu, in the parish of Llanefydd, Denbighshire, son of Robert Roberts, shoemaker, and Anne his wife (see N.L.W. MS. 7000 for the names of some of the ancestors of the parents). He received but little education in his boyhood. He was taught his father's craft, and after a while went to Llanddulas to work for one Humphrey Jones. He was baptised in 1832 by John Evans, Glanwydden, began to preach in January 1834 and, in the summer of the same year, went to Llansilin to be prepared for the ministry by [John Williams](#) (1806 - 1856); [Robert Ellis](#) (Cynddelw) was a fellow-pupil.

In 1835 he settled at Mold as a Baptist home missionary. On 25 June 1837 he was ordained as minister of the Welsh Baptist church in Stanhope Street, Liverpool (see N.L.W. MS. 7127). He married Jane, daughter of [Daniel Jones](#) (1788 - 1862), then minister of the Baptist church in Crosshall Street, Liverpool. Nefydd moved in 1845 to Monmouthshire to become minister of Salem church, Blaenau Gwent (the modern 'Blaina'), where he spent the remainder of his days, busily engaged in a variety of ways.

He became prominent as an eisteddfod competitor and as adjudicator. His best-known printed work, a composite production, was written for eisteddfodau. This is *Crefydd yr Oesoedd Tywyll, neu Henafiaethau Defodol, Chwareu-yddol, a Choelgrefyddol: yn cynnwys y Traethawd Gwobrwyol yn Eisteddfod y Fenni ar Mari Lwyd ... ynghyd a Sylwadau ar lawer o hen Arferion tebyg i Mari Lwyd ...* (Carmarthen, 1852). He set up his own printing press at Blaenau (in 1864) and printed and published *Y Bedyddiwr* for four years; he edited *Seren Gomer* for some years, but it is not known whether he printed more than one number of that journal (N.L.W. MSS. 7077-9). Prominent in Baptist circles, he became well-known in educational circles also, particularly after he had been appointed (in 1853) South Wales agent for the British and Foreign Schools Society (N.L.W. MSS. 7096, 7106-7). For eleven years he was busy with the task of establishing and inspecting schools and arranging for the training of teachers; he had conducted his own 'night school' at Blaenau at one time.

Throughout the years he had been building up a library which eventually reached a total of about 600 volumes, besides several manuscripts of historical or literary interest. Amongst the manuscripts was a copy of the 'Red Book of St Asaph' (N.L.W. MS. 7011), collections of older and later Welsh poems (e.g. N.L.W. MSS. 7012, 7014-7), and the diaries of [Edmund Jones](#), Pontypool (N.L.W. MSS. 7021-30). He also, for a time, kept a book-shop. In addition to material on the history of the Baptists collected by himself, Nefydd acquired material on the same subject accumulated by [Ellis Evans](#), Cefn-mawr (who was Baptist minister at Llanefydd when Nefydd was a young boy) and others. Amongst the contents of the two groups are several hundred letters from ministers and laymen. Part of this composite collection came into the hands of [J. Spinther James](#), and was used by him when he was writing his *Hanes y Bedyddwyr*; by now the [Spinther](#) collection (which was bought by [principal J. H. Davies](#)) and the main portion of the historical material which had remained in the Nefydd library have been reunited in the N.L.W. (For some details about Nefydd's printed books, see an article by E. I. Williams in *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, ii, 246-50).

Nefydd died 18 June 1872, and was buried in the burial-ground of 'Blaenau Gwent' chapel at Abertillery. His first wife, Jane (Jones), had died soon after the removal to Blaenau; the second wife was the widow of Jenkin Edwards. The Nefydd manuscripts (including letters) were transferred to the N.L.W. in 1930 in two groups (N.L.W. MSS. 7011-7175 and 7176-89), to be followed in 1933 by a third group (N.L.W. MSS. 7768-79) and, in 1934, by a fourth group (N.L.W. MSS.9637-9); for details see *N.L.W. Handlist of MSS.*, x, 231-4.

## Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

## Sources

To the sources listed in the text add *Seren Gomer*, May 1895

*NLW MSS* 7100, 7108, and 7181

*Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru*, 1913-14.

## Images

NLW: [Nefydd \(William Roberts\)](#)

Ap Caledfryn, [William Roberts "Nefydd"](#)

## Additional Links

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