

ROBERTS, HUGH GORDON (1885 - 1961), surgeon and missionary

Name: Hugh Gordon Roberts
Date of birth: 1885
Date of death: 1961
Spouse: Katharine Roberts (née Jones)
Parent: Jane Sarah Roberts (née Jones)
Parent: David Roberts
Gender: Male
Occupation: surgeon and missionary
Area of activity: Medicine; Religion
Author: Evan David Jones

One of the sons of David Roberts of Dolenog, Llanidloes, Montgomeryshire, and his wife Jane Sarah, daughter of Thomas Price Jones of Liverpool. He was born 16 July 1885 in Liverpool and was reared there. He was a great-grandson of [David Roberts](#) (1788 - 1869), a doctor in Bodedern, Anglesey, and [Sir William Roberts, F.R.S.](#) (1830 - 1899), who was a prominent doctor in Manchester and London, was his father's uncle. [Frederick Charles Roberts](#) (1862 - 1894), who died young of fever when he was a missionary doctor in Tientsin, was a cousin of his. It is not surprising, therefore, that he changed his mind in the middle of an accountancy course to become a missionary doctor. He graduated M.B., Ch.B., at the University of Liverpool in 1912 and M.D. in 1920. After his marriage to Katharine (died 9 January 1966), daughter of John Jones, Liverpool, in 1913 he went to work to the Khasia Hills, India. They had a son and daughter. He was a civilian surgeon in the capital, Shillong, during 1914-19, and was loaned to the Assam government by the Missionary Society (CM). This gave him an opportunity to quantify and understand the great needs of the province. Before his time the Mission had a travelling doctor, but after the war he returned to Wales to persuade the churches to build a hospital in Shillong. He himself donated £7,000 towards this and the hospital was opened in 1922. He was the superintendent and chief physician and surgeon there from the beginning until 1948 when he retired due to ill-health. More complicated operations were dealt with in the mission hospital than in all the state hospitals of Assam put together; his name became known throughout the province. With the assistance of Margaret Buckley and others he established a nursing school there. He was a member of Assam's Legislative Council, 1921-24, a prominent member of the Assam Medical Council 1920-43, and president of the Assam Branch of the British Medical Association, 1931-33. He came to Britain in 1945 and was general secretary and editor of the Medical Missionary Association of London, 1946-48. He was strong enough to return to India in 1949 to supervise the building of a new hospital in Jowai, a gift from the Presbyterians of Wales to the Presbyterians of Assam. After the completion of the work in 1953 he returned to Britain, living in West Kirby and Eastbourne. He died 20 December 1961.

He was honoured with the C.I.E. in 1928, and was invested with the gold medal of Kaiser-i-Hind in 1925 and the King's Jubilee Medal in 1935. He was Moderator of the English Conference of the Presbyterian Church of Wales in 1937 and received an honorary LL.D. degree from the University of Wales in 1946.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Pedigrees of Anglesey and Carnarvonshire Families (1914), 383

Who was who?

Blwyddiadur y Methodistiaid Calfniaidd, 1963, 270-1

John Hughes Morris, *The Story of our Foreign Mission* (1930), 54-5

Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians, iv, 146-7 for a biography of Sir William Roberts

Mary I. Bryson, *Fred C. Roberts of Tientsin or, for Christ and China* (London 1895)

Arthur Hughes in J. Meirion Lloyd (ed.), *Nine missionary pioneers* (1989)

Further reading

D. Ben Rees, *The Healer of Shillong* (Liverpool 2016)

Additional Links

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Published date: 2001

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