# ROBINSON, GILBERT WOODING (1888 - 1950), professor of Agricultural Chemistry, world authority on soils

**Name:** Gilbert Wooding Robinson
**Date of birth:** 1888
**Date of death:** 1950
**Spouse:** Mary Isabel Robinson (née James)
**Spouse:** Winifred Annie Robinson (née Rushworth)
**Parent:** Mary Emma Robinson
**Parent:** John Fairs Robinson
**Gender:** Male
**Occupation:** professor of Agricultural Chemistry, world authority on soils
**Area of activity:** Education; Nature and Agriculture; Science and Mathematics
**Author:** Robert Alun Roberts

Born at Wolverhampton, 7 November 1888, son of John Fairs and Mary Emma Robinson. He was educated at Wolverhampton grammar school and Cambridge University where he was a scholar of Caius College (B.A. 1910). For two years he acted as demonstrator in the School of Agriculture at Cambridge and completed a survey of the soils and agriculture of Shropshire (1913). In 1912 he was appointed adviser in Agricultural Chemistry under the Board of Agriculture for the north Wales area at University College, Bangor, a post he held until the service was re-organised in 1946. In 1926 he was appointed Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at Bangor, and became a world authority on soils, his early research being on the palaeozoic soils of north Wales and on the mechanical analysis of soils. He built up a school of research in his dept. at Bangor, initiated a Soil Survey of Wales and trained many graduate surveyors for this work in Britain and overseas. He became the first director of the National Soil Survey of England and Wales from 1939 to 1946 when the service was transferred to Rothamsted. Robinson was a prominent figure in the International Society of Soil Science, he attended its first Congress in USA in 1925, and was president of its first Commission for several years. He travelled widely in Europe, West Indies, USA, and Africa, and in 1949 visited Australia and New Zealand as a delegate of the Royal Society to the Pacific Science Congress. He was devoted to Spain and its language, was hon. member of Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, and held its medal of distinction. He was interested in the classics; he was President of the North Wales Branch of the Classical Association in 1928.

His book *Soils, their origin, constitution and classification* (1932) was the first English textbook on pedology. In 1937 he published *Mother earth* in the form of letters to R.G. Stapledon revealing his Virgilian outlook on the countryside, and wrote many technical articles to scientific journals. He received many honours - Cambridge Sc.D. in 1936, F.R.S. and C.B.E. in 1948. He was a J.P. for Caernarfonshire and served on the Departmental Committee on Rural Education in Wales (1928-30), the Central Advisory Council for Education in Wales, and as a devoted member of The Church in Wales he was Chairman of the Bangor Diocesan Religious Education Committee, and on the Governing Body of the Church in Wales from 1939. He was vice-principal of University College Bangor in 1947-48 and Dean of the Faculty of Science from 1948.

In 1913 he married (1) Winifred Annie Rushworth of Louth, Lincolnshire, and they had one son and three daughters. In 1949 he married (2) Mary Isabel, daughter of H.L. James, Dean of Bangor. He died in Bangor on 6 May 1950.

## Author

**Robert Alun Roberts**, (1894 - 1969)

## Sources

*Journal of Soil Science* (1950-1993), 2, no. 2, 1951

*Agricultural Progress the journal of the Agricultural Education Association*, 25, pt. 1, 1951

E. J. Russell, Gilbert Wooding Robinson. 1888-1950, *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. 7, no.20, pp. 475-491, November 1951

*Who's who?*

## Additional Links

VIAF: 8898106

Wikidata: Q20751805

**Published date:** 2001

**Article Copyright:** http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/



The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our sponsorship page.

Donate

**APA Citation**

Roberts, R. A., (2001). ROBINSON, GILBERT WOODING (1888 - 1950), professor of Agricultural Chemistry, world authority on soils. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 4 Oct 2024, from https://biography.wales/article/s2-ROBI-WOO-1888

Copy to Clipboard

Privacy & Cookies
Copyright
The Project
Help
Contact

LLYFRGELL
THE NATIO

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government