Y Parch/Rev.

Canon Robert Edwin Roberts

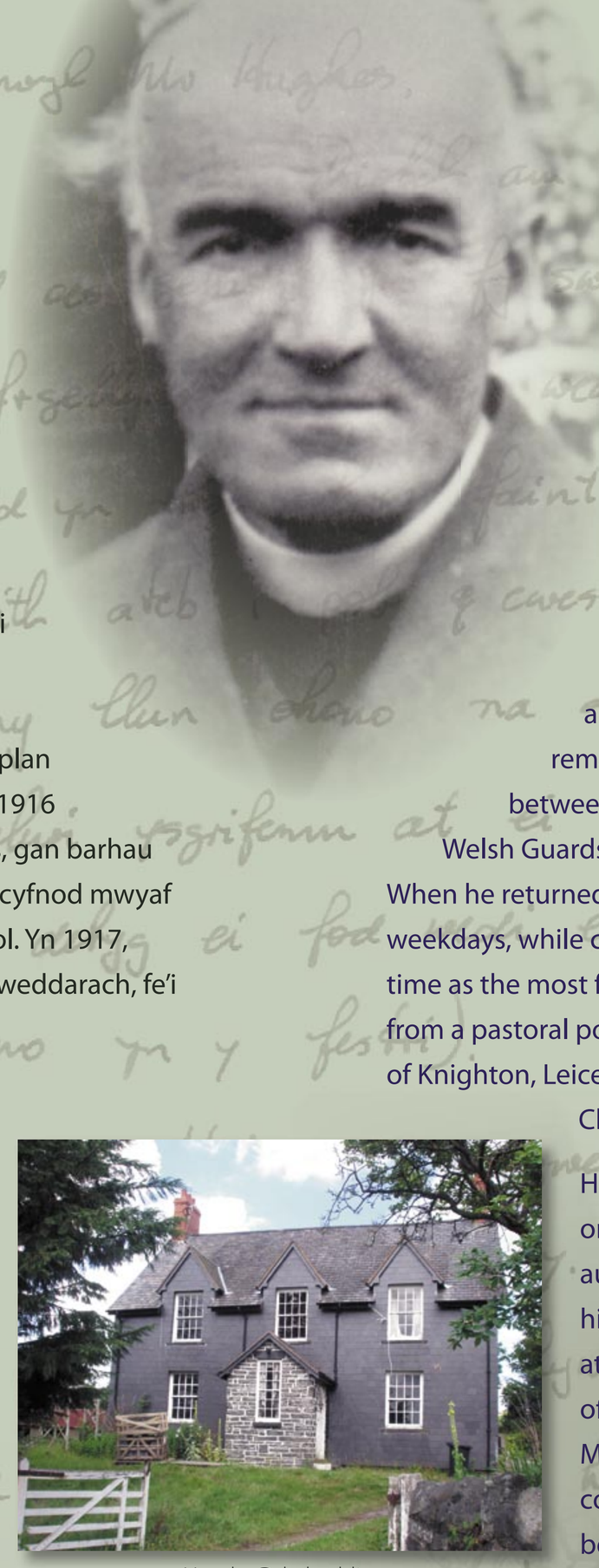
Hendre Ddu
(1878-1940)

Ganwyd Robert Edwin Roberts yn Hendre Ddu, Llangernyw ar y 6ed o Ragfyr 1878, yn fab i Dafydd a Jane Roberts. Derbyniodd ei addysg elfennol yn Ysgol Llangernyw, ac ymhen amser aeth i Goleg Ellesmere, Amwythig ac oddi yno i Brifysgol Caerweir (Durham) a graddio gydag Anrhydedd. Wedi hynny daeth yn Feistr yn Ysgol Côr Abaty San Steffan, penodiad oedd yn gweddu iddo oherwydd ei ddiddordeb mawr yng nghaniadaeth y cysegr. Canodd fel aelod o'r côr yn ystod coroniad Edward VII, a chafodd wahoddiad i ail-ymuno â'r côr ar gyfer coroniad Siôr V.

Yn dilyn ei ordeinio, bu'n gurad yn Yr Wyddgrug rhwng 1902 ac 1906, a datblygodd yn bregethwr grymus a chymeradwy. Yna, symudodd i esgobaeth Trebedr (Peterborough), ble cafodd ei benodi yn is-Ganon yn yr Eglwys Gadeiriol. Yn 1910, cafodd ei benodi yn Ficer St Mark's, Trebedr ac arhosodd yno hyd at 1917, heblaw am flwyddyn yn Ffrainc rhwng 1915 a 1916, pan ymunodd â'r Gwarchodlu Cymreig gan eu bod angen caplan oedd yn rhugl yn y Gymraeg. Wedi iddo ddychwelyd yn 1916 gweithiodd mewn ffatri arfau rhyfel yn ystod yr wythnos, gan barhau gyda'i ddyletswyddau ar y Sul. Ystyriai'r amser hwn fel y cyfnod mwyaf ffrwythlon yn ystod ei weinidogaeth o safbwynt bugeiliol. Yn 1917, cafodd ei benodi i Ficeriaeth Knighton, Caerlŷr ac yn ddiweddarach, fe'i dyrchafwyd yn Ganon yn Eglwys Golegaidd Sant Martin.

Roedd ganddo lais bariton da, a bu iddo ddarlithio am gerddoriaeth Gymreig, Gwyddelig ac Albanaidd, gan ddiddanu'r gynulleidfa gyda chyfnodau digymell o ganu yn ystod ei ddarlithoedd. Mewn un darlith ar emynau a thonau Celtaidd yn Eglwys All Hallows, Llundain, bu iddo gyhuddo'r Saeson o anffafriaeth gan nad oedd yna dôn nac emyn Cymreig wedi ei chynnwys o fewn cloriau'r llyfr emynau 'Ancient and Modern'. Fe'i hanrhydeddwyd drwy ei dderbyn yn Aelod Anrhydeddus yng Ngorsedd y Beirdd yn Eisteddfod 1926, a'i ddewis o enw oedd 'Elwy', sef afon sydd a'i tharddiad yn Llangernyw.

Symudodd ym mlynyddoedd olaf ei oes i blwyf tawel Ashwell, Oakham. Treuliodd bron i oes gyfan yn gweinidogaethu yn Lloegr, er hynny ei freuddwyd oedd cael dychwelyd i Gymru i wasanaethu ei wlad a'i genedl ond yn anffodus, ni wireddwyd ei ddymuniad. Hunodd ar 18fed o Fehefin 1940.



Hendre Ddu heddiw.
Hendre Ddu today.

Robert Edwin Roberts was born on the 6th of December 1878, the son of Dafydd and Jane Roberts. He was educated at Llangernyw school, followed by Ellesmere College in Shropshire and graduated with Honours from Durham University. After completing his degree he became a master at the Choir School of Westminster Abbey, which suited his great love of Church music. He sang as a member of the choir during the coronation of King Edward VII, and was subsequently invited to re join the choir for the coronation of George V.

After his ordination, Canon Roberts served as a curate in Mold between 1902 and 1906, where he quickly gained a reputation as a vigorous and creditable preacher. He then moved to the Peterborough diocese, where he was appointed as a minor Canon of the Cathedral. In 1910, he was appointed Vicar of St Mark's, Peterborough where he remained until 1917, interrupted by a year in France between 1915 and 1916 when he saw active service with the Welsh Guards as they needed a fluent Welsh speaking chaplain. When he returned in 1916, he took on work in a munitions factory on weekdays, while continuing his Sunday duties. He often spoke of this time as the most fruitful he had experienced in the course of his ministry from a pastoral point of view. In 1917, he was appointed to the Vicariate of Knighton, Leicester, and was later appointed Canon of the Collegiate Church of St.Martin's.

He was a gifted baritone singer and often gave lecturers on Welsh, Irish and Scottish music, entertaining his audience with spontaneous interludes of song during his talks. During one lecture on Celtic tunes and hymns at All Hallows Church, London, he accused the English of discrimination due to the fact that the 'Ancient and Modern' hymn book did not contain a Welsh hymn or composition between its covers. He was honoured by being accepted as an Honorary Member of the Gorsedd of Bards at the 1926 Eisteddfod, his choice of name being 'Elwy', a river which has its source at Llangernyw.

In his later years he moved to the quiet parish of Ashwell, Oakham. He spent almost a lifetime as a minister in England; his dream was to return to the land of his birth, which he sadly never achieved. He died on the 18th of June 1940.