

## Rev. John Roberts

### Transcription of obituary published in the Minutes of Conference by W.W.

To his many friends, the life of John Roberts, measured from the human standard of fifty-seven years, seemed all too short; but this can be said, our brother sought to make the most of and to fill these years with the best he could crowd into them.

“He liveth long who liveth well.”

Born on “The Common,” Buckley, Flintshire, near the Welsh Hills, there was in him a Celtic strain, and its fervour was evincible in the passionate pleadings of his prayers. John Roberts was born well, and always referred to his parents in terms of tender affection. His father was his model, and to the writer’s knowledge, extending over many years, no man stands higher in the estimation of his people than John Roberts, Senr. His loyalty, devotion and preaching power accounts for much that was best in the son.

From his boyhood our brother lived in and for his Church, and at the age of twelve took an active part in the memorable revival led by the late Rev. James Crompton. Later, he obtained an appointment with a business firm in Liverpool, and at the the time when his promotion was under consideration, he yielded to the pressure of the Jubilee Drive officials and gave himself with whole-hearted consecration to the ministry of our Church. His first term of service was in the South, Chichester and Plymouth. And his itinerary includes the Circuits of Prestwich Oldham II., Tarporley, Earlstown, Buxton, Halifax and Marple.

Throughout these Circuits there is a chain of gracious and helpful memories. A man of intense spirituality, with wonderful insight into the truth and gifted with the power of ready utterance, he ministered with profit to his own people, and in an extraordinary degree appealed to the man in the street. He had the joy of turning many to righteousness.

Of very special mention, was his marvellous power of prayer. The Heavens were opened, and God, life and immortality became very real as he laid bare his soul in prayer.

Great as was the service he rendered to his Church, the man was the greatest of all. A man of distinctive individuality, with a capacity for loyal friendship, possessing a large sympathetic nature, a Greatheart among his brother ministers. He was the life and soul of any company in which he found himself. All were conscious of his personal charm,

Nor were his friendships exclusive in any restricted sense. Like his Master, he mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, and was ready to become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.

In the war years John Roberts’s lot was in Buxton. Buxton became a military centre, from which thousands of troops were despatched to the various war-fields. John Roberts soon became a big brother to these men, and gained their confidences to such an extent, that he was often called in to deal with the most delicate situations. Our Church became, a live centre for the soldiers, and many a Sunday evening large numbers of strong men came boldly out for consecration. One night specially lives in the memory of all privileged to be present. An order had come calling up some thousands for active service. On the eve of their departure the room was crowded with khaki-clad men, to say good-bye to their friend, John Roberts.

What friendly handshaking—what deep emotions—what inability to express real feelings. The hour came for closing, yet no one wanted to leave. Then a great silence that could be felt came over all. What more could be said or done? John Roberts was equal to the occasion, and said, “Let us pray.”

Every knee was bowed as he commended all to the care and keeping of God in such a prayer as none will ever forget. Hundreds of letters from various battle fronts were received, testifying to the wonderful effect of that prayer.

A remarkable fact about this incident is that every one present at that meeting came back safely home at the end of the war.

We venture our opinion, that the sacrifices this friend of the soldiers made, by day and night, over-taxed his strength, and ultimately led to his physical breakdown.

For several years our friend had been in failing health, and the Conference of 1927 granted him an assistant, with a year’s rest. He resumed his work with a brave effort, but in March he was compelled to face the inevitable, and apply for superannuation. Before the application could be presented to the Conference, John Roberts had passed to his reward.

On Thursday, June 7th, a memorial service was held in Trinity, Marple, the Church being filled. Representatives of the Churches in the Circuit, and from the Circuits on which our brother had travelled, a large attendance of his ministerial and lay brethren of the Manchester District, together with the Vicar and Free Church Ministers of Marple, were present to pay their tribute to a brother greatly beloved.

The Rev. William Barker attended on behalf of the General Committee, and the Revs. J.E. Woodfield and Wm. Upright, for the District Committee. An impressive address was given by the Rev. F. Humble, an intimate friend for twenty-eight years.

In prayer the Rev. W. Upright expressed the sentiments of all present, supplicating for the troubled hearts the comforts of God.

To the widow and the two sons (both local preachers) we tender our deepest sympathy. On the following day all that could die of our friend was laid to rest at Stony Stratford, in the burial ground of the Sanctuary, from whence the two hearts started their married life.

We thank God for a good man, a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, and a joyous comrade, whose radiant face we shall see again in the Homeland.

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#### References

*PM Minutes* 19929/283