



## Bartholomew Roberts



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## Bartholomew Roberts

**Bartholomew Roberts** (17 May 1682 - 10 February 1722), born **John Roberts**, was a [Welsh pirate](#) who raided ships off the [Americas](#) and [West Africa](#) between 1719 and 1722. He was the most successful pirate of the [Golden Age of Piracy](#), as measured by vessels captured, taking over 400 [prizes](#) in his career. He is also known as **Black Bart** ([Welsh](#): ), but this name was never used in his lifetime.

### Early life



Bartholomew Roberts' memorial stone in Casnewydd Bach

He was born John Roberts in 1682 in Casnewydd-Bach, between [Fishguard](#) and [Haverfordwest](#) in [Pembrokeshire](#), Wales. His father was most likely George Roberts. It's not clear why Roberts changed his name from John to Bartholomew, but pirates often adopted aliases. He may have chosen his first name after the well-known [buccaneer Bartholomew Sharp](#). He is thought to have gone to sea when he was 13 in 1695, but there is no further record of him until 1718, when he was mate of a [Barbados sloop](#).

In 1719, Roberts was [second mate](#) on the [slave ship Princess](#) under Captain Abraham Plumb. In early June that year, the *Princess* was anchored at [Anomabu](#) (then spelled Annamaboa, which is situated along the [Gold Coast](#) of West Africa, present-day [Ghana](#)) when she was captured by pirates. The pirates were in two vessels, *Royal Rover* and *Royal James*, and were led by captain [Howell Davis](#). Davis, like Roberts, was a Welshman, originally from [Milford Haven](#) in [Pembrokeshire](#). Roberts and several other of the crew of the *Princess* were forced to join the pirates.

Davis quickly discovered Roberts' abilities as a [navigator](#) and took to consulting him. He was also able to confide information to Roberts in Welsh, thereby keeping it hidden from the rest of the crew. Roberts is said to have been reluctant to become a pirate at first, but soon came to see the advantages of this new lifestyle. Captain Charles Johnson reports him as saying:

In an honest service there is thin commons, low wages, and hard labour. In this, plenty and satiety, pleasure and ease, liberty and power; and who would not balance creditor on this side, when all the hazard that is run for it, at worst is only a sour look or two at choking? No, a merry life and a short one shall be my motto.

– *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates*(1724), p.213-214

### Life as a pirate

#### Commander or commoner?

In the merchant navy, Roberts' wage was less than £4 per month and he had no chance of promotion to captaincy.

A few weeks after Roberts' capture, *Royal James* had to be abandoned because of [worm](#) damage. *Royal Rover* headed for the island of [Príncipe](#). Davis hoisted the flags of a British man-of-war and was allowed to enter the harbour. After a few days, Davis invited the governor to lunch on board his ship, intending to hold him hostage for a ransom. Davis had to send boats to collect the governor, and he was invited to call at the fort for a glass of wine first. The Portuguese had discovered that their visitors were pirates. They ambushed Davis' party on its way to the fort, shooting Davis dead.

A new captain had to be elected. Davis' crew was divided into "Lords" and "Commons", and it was the "Lords" who had the right to propose a name to the remainder of the crew. Within six weeks of his capture, Roberts was elected captain. This was unusual, especially as he had objected to serving on the vessel. Historians believe he was elected for his navigational abilities and his personality, which history reflects was outspoken and opinionated.

He accepted of the Honour, saying, that since he had dipp'd his Hands in Muddy Water, and must be a Pyrate, it was better being a Commander than a common Man.

– *A General History of the ... Pyrates*(1724), p.162

Roberts' first act as captain was to lead the crew back to Príncipe to avenge the death of Captain Davis. Roberts and his crew landed on the island in the darkness of night, killed a large portion of the male population, and stole all items of value that they could carry away. Soon afterwards, he captured a Dutch [Guineaman](#), then two days later a British ship called *Experiment*. The pirate ship took on water and provisions at Anamboe, where a vote was taken on whether the next voyage should be to the [East Indies](#) or to [Brazil](#). The vote was for Brazil.

The combination of bravery and success that marked this adventure cemented most of the crew's loyalty to Roberts. They concluded that he was "pistol proof" and that they had much to gain by staying with him.



Roberts' first flag shows himself and [Death](#) holding an [hourglass](#).

#### Brazil and the Caribbean July 1719 - May 1720

Roberts and his crew crossed the Atlantic and watered and boot-topped their ship on the uninhabited island of Ferdinando. They spent about nine weeks off the Brazilian coast but saw no ships. They were about to leave for the [West Indies](#) when they encountered a fleet of 42 Portuguese ships in the [Todos os Santos' Bay](#), waiting for two men-of-war of 70 guns each to escort them to [Lisbon](#). Roberts took one of the vessels and ordered her master to point out the richest ship in the fleet. He pointed out *Sagrada Familia*, a ship of 40 guns and a crew of 170, which Roberts and his men boarded and captured. *Sagrada Familia* contained 40,000 gold [moidores](#) and jewellery designed for the King of Portugal, including a cross set with diamonds.

*Rover* next headed for [Devil's Island](#) off the coast of Guiana to spend the booty. A few weeks later, they headed for the River Surinam where they captured a sloop. After they sighted a [brigantine](#), Roberts took 40 men to pursue it in the sloop, leaving [Walter Kennedy](#) in command of *Rover*. The sloop became wind-bound for eight days, and when Roberts and his crew finally returned to their ship, they discovered that Kennedy had sailed off with *Rover* and what remained of the loot. Roberts and his crew renamed their sloop *Fortune* and agreed on new articles, now known as a [pirate code](#), which they swore on a Bible to uphold:

In late February 1720, they were joined by French pirate [Montigny la Palisse](#) in another sloop, *Sea King*. The inhabitants of [Barbados](#) equipped two well-armed ships, *Summerset* and *Philipa*, to try to put an end to the pirate menace. On 26 February, they encountered the two pirate sloops. *Sea King* quickly fled, and *Fortune* broke off the engagement after sustaining considerable damage and was able to escape. Roberts headed for [Dominica](#) to repair the sloop, with twenty of his crew dying of their wounds on the voyage. There were also two sloops from [Martinique](#) out searching for the pirates, and Roberts swore vengeance against the inhabitants of Barbados and Martinique. He had a new flag made with a drawing of himself standing upon 2 skulls, one labelled ABH (A Barbadian's Head) and the other AMH (A Martiniquian's Head).

### Bartholomew Roberts



Bartholomew Roberts at [Ouidah](#) with his ship and captured merchantmen in the background.

<b>Born</b>	17 May 1682
<b>Born</b>	Casnewydd Bach, near <a href="#">Puncheston</a> , <a href="#">Pembrokeshire</a> , Wales
<b>Died</b>	10 February 1722 (aged 39)
<b>Died</b>	At sea off of Cape Lopez, <a href="#">Gabon</a>
<b>Nickname</b>	<a href="#">Piratical career</a>
<b>Type</b>	Pirate
<b>Years active</b>	1719-1722
<b>Rank</b>	Captain
<b>Base of operations</b>	Off the coast of the <a href="#">Americas</a> and <a href="#">West Africa</a>
<b>Commands</b>	<i>Royal Rover</i> , <i>Fortune</i> , <i>Good Fortune</i> , <i>Royal Fortune</i> , <i>Ranger</i> , <i>Little Ranger</i>
<b>Wealth</b>	470 vessels



The death of Captain Howell Davis in an ambush on Príncipe

## Newfoundland and the Caribbean June 1720 - April 1721



Black Bart's new flag showed him standing on two skulls, representing the heads of a Barbadian and a Martiniquian

*Fortune* next headed northwards towards [Newfoundland](#), raiding [Canso, Nova Scotia](#), and capturing a number of ships around [Cape Breton](#) and the Newfoundland banks. Roberts raided the harbour of Ferryland, capturing a dozen vessels. On 21 June, he attacked the larger harbour of [Trepassey](#), sailing in with black flags flying. In the harbour he discovered 22 merchant ships and 150 fishing ships, all of which were abandoned by their panic-stricken captains and crews, and the pirates were masters of Trepassey without any resistance being offered. Roberts had captured all 22 merchant ships, but was angered by the cowardice of the captains who had fled their ships. Every morning he had a gun fired and the captains were forced to attend Roberts on board his ship; they were told that anyone who was absent would have his ship burnt. One [brig](#) from [Bristol](#) was taken over by the pirates to replace the sloop *Fortune* and fitted out with 16 guns. When the pirates left in late June, all the other vessels in the harbour were set on fire. During July, Roberts captured nine or ten French ships and commandeered one of them, fitting her with 26 cannons and changing her name to *Good Fortune*. With this more powerful ship, the pirates captured many more vessels before heading south for the West Indies, accompanied by Montigny la Palisse's sloop, which had rejoined them.

In September 1720, *Good Fortune* was [careened](#) and repaired at the island of [Carriacou](#) before being renamed *Royal Fortune*, the first of several ships to be given this name by Roberts. In late September, *Royal Fortune* and *Fortune* headed for the island of [St. Christopher's](#) and entered Basse Terra Road, flying black flags and with their drummers and trumpeters playing. They sailed in among the ships in the Road, all of which promptly struck their flags. The next landfall was at the island of [St. Bartholomew](#), where the French governor allowed the pirates to remain for several weeks to carouse. By 25 October, they were at sea again off [St. Lucia](#), where they captured up to 15 French and English ships in the next three days. Among the captured ships was *Greyhound*, whose chief mate [James Skyrme](#) joined the pirates. He later became captain of Roberts' consort, *Ranger*.

During this time, Roberts reportedly caught the [Governor of Martinique](#), who was sailing aboard a 52-gun French [warship](#). The Governor was caught and promptly hanged on the yardarm of his own ship, which the pirates converted into the new *Royal Fortune*. According to Konstam and Rickman, this reported capture was an embellishment by Captain Charles Johnson in his *A General History of the Pyrates*.

By the spring of 1721, Roberts' depredations had almost brought seaborne trade to a standstill in the West Indies. *Royal Fortune* and *Good Fortune* therefore set sail for West Africa. On 18 April, [Thomas Anstis](#), the commander of *Good Fortune*, left Roberts in the night and continued to raid shipping in the Caribbean, with future captains [John Fenn](#) and [Brigstock Weaver](#) aboard. *Royal Fortune* continued towards Africa.



Bartholomew Roberts at Ouidah with his ship and captured merchantmen in the background.

### West Africa April 1721 - January 1722

By late April, Roberts was at the [Cape Verde](#) islands. *Royal Fortune* was found to be leaky, and was abandoned there. The pirates transferred to *Sea King*, which was renamed *Royal Fortune*. The new *Royal Fortune* made landfall off the Guinea coast in early June, near the mouth of the Senegal River. Two French ships, one of 10 guns and one of 16 guns, gave chase, but were captured by Roberts. Both ships were commandeered. One, *Comte de Toulouse*, was renamed *Ranger*, while the other was named *Little Ranger* and used as a storeship. [Thomas Sutton](#) was made captain of *Ranger* and James Skyrme captain of *Little Ranger*.

Roberts next headed for [Sierra Leone](#), arriving on 12 June. Here he was told by retired pirate [John "Old Crackers" Leadstone](#) that two [Royal Navy](#) ships, *HMS Swallow* and *HMS Weymouth*, had left at the end of April, planning to return before Christmas. On 8 August, he captured two large ships at Point Cestos, now [River Cess](#) in [Liberia](#). One of these was the frigate *Onslow*, transporting soldiers bound for [Cape Coast](#) (Cabo Corso) Castle. A number of the soldiers wished to join the pirates, and they were eventually accepted, however they only received a quarter of a pirates pay because they were not sailors most of their lives. *Onslow* was converted to become the fourth *Royal Fortune*. In November and December, the pirates careened their ships and relaxed at Cape Lopez and the island of [Annobon](#). Sutton was replaced by Skyrme as captain of *Ranger*.

They captured several vessels in January 1722, then sailed into [Ouidah](#) (Whydah) harbour with black flags flying. Ten of the eleven ships at anchor there immediately struck their colours, but were restored to their owners after a ransom of eight pounds of gold dust per ship was paid. The refusal of the eleventh vessel to surrender so enraged Roberts' crew that, under cover of night, they climbed aboard and set her on fire. The captured vessels were slave ships, and the one set on fire had around eighty enslaved Africans on board. They perished either as a result of the fire or by drowning or shark attack after jumping overboard.

### Death in battle

On 5 February 1722, Captain [Chaloner Ogle](#) of *HMS Swallow* came upon the pirate ships *Royal Fortune*, *Ranger*, and *Little Ranger* careening at [Cape Lopez](#). *Swallow* veered away to avoid a [shoal](#), making the pirates think that she was a fleeing merchant ship; some sources claim Ogle spotted Roberts' ships and turned *Swallow* as a ruse. *Ranger* departed in pursuit, commanded by James Skyrme. Once out of earshot of the other pirates, *Swallow* opened her gun ports and opened fire. Ten pirates were killed and Skyrme had his leg taken off by a cannonball, but he refused to leave the deck. Eventually, *Ranger* was forced to [strike her colors](#) and the surviving crew were captured.

On 10 February, *Swallow* returned to Cape Lopez and found *Royal Fortune* still there. On the previous day, Roberts had captured *Neptune*, and many of his crew were drunk and unfit for duty just when he needed them most. At first, the pirates thought that the approaching ship was *Ranger* returning, but a deserter from *Swallow* recognized her and informed Roberts while he was breakfasting with Captain Hill, the master of *Neptune*. As he usually did before action, he dressed himself in his finest clothes:

Roberts himself made a gallant figure, at the time of the [engagement](#), being dressed in a rich crimson damask waistcoat and breeches, a red feather in his hat, a gold chain round his neck, with a diamond cross hanging to it, a sword in his hand, and two pairs of pistols slung over his shoulders ...

– *A General History of the ... Pyrates* (1724), p. 212

The pirates' plan was to sail past *Swallow*, which meant exposing themselves to one broadside. Once past, they would have a good chance of escaping. However, the helmsman failed to keep *Royal Fortune* on the right course, and *Swallow* was able to approach to deliver a second broadside. Captain Roberts was killed by [grapeshot](#), which struck him in the throat while he stood on the deck. Before his body could be captured by Ogle, Roberts's wish to be buried at sea was fulfilled by his crew, who weighed his body down and threw it overboard after wrapping it in his ship's sail. It was never found.

Roberts's death shocked the pirate world, as well as the Royal Navy. The local merchants and civilians had thought him invincible, and some considered him a hero.

### Pirate Code

As recorded by [Captain Charles Johnson](#) regarding the articles of Bartholomew Roberts.

- I. Every man has a vote in affairs of moment; has equal title to the fresh provisions, or strong liquors, at any time seized, and may use them at pleasure, unless a scarcity makes it necessary, for the good of all, to vote a retrenchment.
- II. Every man to be called fairly in turn, by list, on board of prizes because, (over and above their proper share,) they were on these occasions allowed a shift of clothes: but if they defrauded the company to the value of a dollar in plate, jewels, or money, [marooning](#) was their punishment. If the robbery was only betwixt one another, they contented themselves with slitting the ears and nose of him that was guilty, and set him on shore, not in an uninhabited place, but somewhere, where he was sure to encounter hardships.
- III. No person to game at cards or dice for money.
- IV. The lights and candles to be put out at eight o'clock at night: if any of the crew, after that hour still remained inclined for drinking, they were to do it on the open deck;
- V. To keep their piece, pistols, and cutlass clean and fit for service.
- VI. No boy or woman to be allowed amongst them. If any man were to be found seducing any of the latter sex, and carried her to sea, disguised, he was to suffer death;
- VII. To desert the ship or their quarters in battle, was punished with death or marooning.
- VIII. No striking one another on board, but every man's quarrels to be ended on shore, at sword and pistol.
- IX. No man to talk of breaking up their way of living, till each had shared one thousand pounds. If in order to this, any man should lose a limb, or become a cripple in their service, he was to have eight hundred dollars, out of the public stock, and for lesser hurts, proportionately.



Bartholomew Roberts's crew carousing at the [Calabar River](#). Most of the crew were drunk when *Swallow* appeared.

X. The **Captain** and **Quartermaster** to receive two shares of a prize: the **master**, **boatswain**, and **gunner**, one share and a half, and other officers one and quarter.

XI. The musicians to have rest on the Sabbath Day, but the other six days and nights, none without special favour.

## Aftermath

The battle continued for another two hours until *Royal Fortunes* mainmast fell and the pirates signaled for quarter. One member of the crew, John Philips, tried to reach the magazine with a lighted match to blow up the ship, but was prevented by two men. Only three pirates had been killed in the battle, including Roberts. A total of 272 men had been captured by the Royal Navy. Of these, 65 were black, and they were sold into slavery. The remainder were taken to **Cape Coast Castle**, apart from those who died on the voyage back. 54 were condemned to death, of whom 52 were hanged and two reprieved. Another twenty were allowed to sign indentures with the **Royal African Company**; Burl comments that they "exchanged an immediate death for a lingering one". Seventeen men were sent to the Marshalsea prison in London for trial, where some were acquitted and released.

Of the captured pirates who told their place of birth, 42% were from **Cornwall**, **Devon**, and **Somerset**, and another 19% from London. There were smaller numbers from northern England and from Wales, and another quarter from a variety of countries including Ireland, Scotland, the West Indies, the Netherlands, and Greece. Roberts experienced problems with mutinous Irishmen early in his pirate career and was known to generally avoid recruiting Irishmen, to the extent that captured merchant sailors would sometimes affect an Irish accent to discourage Roberts from forcing them into his pirate crew.

Captain **Chaloner Ogle** was rewarded with a knighthood, the only British naval officer to be honoured specifically for his actions against pirates. He also profited financially, taking gold dust from Roberts' cabin, and he eventually became an admiral.

This battle proved a turning point in the war against the pirates, and many consider the death of Roberts to mark the end of the Golden Age of Piracy.

The defeat of Roberts and the subsequent eradication of piracy off the coast of Africa represented a turning point in the **slave trade** and even in the larger history of capitalism.

– *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* Rediker (2004)

## Personal characteristics

Most of the information on Roberts comes from the book *A General History of the Pyrates*, published a few years after Roberts' death. The original 1724 title page credits one **Captain Charles Johnson** as the author. (The book is often printed under the byline of **Daniel Defoe** on the assumption that "Charles Johnson" is a **pseudonym**, but there is no proof that Defoe is the author, and the matter remains in dispute.) Johnson devotes more space to Roberts than to any of the other pirates in his book, describing him as:

... a tall black [i.e. dark complexioned] Man, near forty Years of Age ... of good natural Parts, and personal Bravery, tho' he apply'd them to such wicked Purposes, as made them of no Commendation, frequently drinking 'Damn to him who ever lived to wear a Halter'.

– *A General History of the ... Pyrates* (1724), p.213

After his exploits in Newfoundland, a state Governor from **New England** commented that "one cannot with-hold admiration for his bravery and courage". He hated cowardice, and when the crews of 22 ships in Trepassey harbour fled without firing a shot he was angry at their failure to defend their ships.

Roberts was the archetypal pirate captain in his love of fine clothing and jewelry, but he had some traits unusual in a pirate, notably a preference for drinking tea rather than rum. He is often described as a **teetotaler** and a **Sabbatarian**, but there is no proof of this. He certainly disliked drunkenness while at sea, yet it appears that he drank beer. Ironically, Roberts' final defeat was facilitated by the drunkenness of his crew. The Sabbatarian claim arises from the fact that musicians were not obliged to play on the Sabbath - this may merely have been intended to ensure the musicians a day's rest, as they were otherwise obliged to play whenever the crew demanded.

Black Bart was not as cruel to prisoners as some pirates such as **Edward Low**, but did not treat them as well as did **Samuel Bellamy**, **Howell Davis**, or **Edward England**. Roberts sometimes gave gifts to cooperative captains and crews of captured ships, such as pieces of jewelry or items of captured cargo. He would sometimes ill-use prisoners if he felt that the crew demanded it, but:

When he found that rigour was not expected from his people (for he often practised it to appease them), then he would give strangers to understand that it was pure inclination that induced him to a good treatment of them, and not any love or partiality to their persons; "For", says he, "there is none of you but will hang me, I know, whenever you can clinch me within your power."

– *A General History of the ... Pyrates* (1724), p.183

In 1997, a book was published that theorized Bartholomew Roberts was a woman **transvestite**. It was argued that Roberts' corpse was thrown overboard to conceal this fact.

## Popular culture

- Bartholomew Roberts is one of four pirate captains mentioned in **Robert Louis Stevenson's** *Treasure Island*. In it, **Long John Silver** says that the surgeon who amputated his leg was one of Roberts' men:

"It was a master surgeon, him that ampytated me - out of college and all - Latin by the bucket, and what not; but he was hanged like a dog, and sun-dried like the rest, at Corso Castle. That was Roberts' men, that was, and comed of changing names of their ships - *Royal Fortune* and so on."

– *Robert Louis Stevenson, Treasure Island*

- Several historical novels feature Roberts as the protagonist, including *The Devil's Captain* (1992) by Philip Shea, *The Requiem Shark* (1999) by **Nicholas Griffin**, and *The Devil's Captain* (2000) by Frank Sherry. Roberts' 1720 kidnapping of navigator Harry Glasby and Glasby's ultimate escape is the basis for the novel, "Glasby's Fortune" (2017) by James H. Drescher.
- A number of novels and poems have been published in Welsh featuring Bartholomew Roberts, notably a ballad by **I. D. Hooson**, for which a vocal score was later composed by **Alun Hoddinott**, and a novel by **T. Llew Jones**.
- In the novel *The Princess Bride* and its **film adaptation**, protagonist Westley dons the mantle of the **Dread Pirate Roberts**, a mythical figure inspired by Bartholomew Roberts.
- In the manga series *One Piece*, a character named Bartholomew Kuma is named for Roberts. The king of the pirates in the series, Gol D. Roger, also resembles Roberts in a number of ways.
- In an **episode** of the animated television series *South Park*, the **Casa Bonita** restaurant in **Lakewood, Colorado**, features an attraction called "Black Bart's Cave", named for Roberts.
- Roberts may be the inspiration for the "Lord Bartholomew" in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series.
- Roberts appears as a **non-player character** in the *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* video game, voiced by **Fred Tatasciore**.
- A fictionalised version of Roberts appears as the primary antagonist of the 2013 video game *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, voiced by **Oliver Milburn**. In the game, Roberts is reimagined as a "sage", a human reincarnation of the Precursor scientist, Aita.

## Notes



Bart Roberts, Trying Deserters, from the Pirates of the Spanish Main series (N19) for Allen & Ginter Cigarettes MET DP835008

- <sup>↑</sup> <sup>^</sup> "Boot-topping" was similar to careening, except that only the upper part of the hull was cleaned.

## Citations

- <sup>↑</sup> Rediker p. 33.
- <sup>↑</sup> [Conlin 2009](#) p. 32.
- <sup>↑</sup> Sanders, p. 18. "Black Bart" was coined as the title of a 20th-century poem by Welsh poet [I. D. Hooson](#), who apparently picked that name because Johnson described Roberts as having a "black" complexion.
- <sup>↑</sup> Yount p.74
- <sup>↑</sup> Burl p. 55
- <sup>↑</sup> Yount p.64
- <sup>↑</sup> Sanders, p. 18.

## References

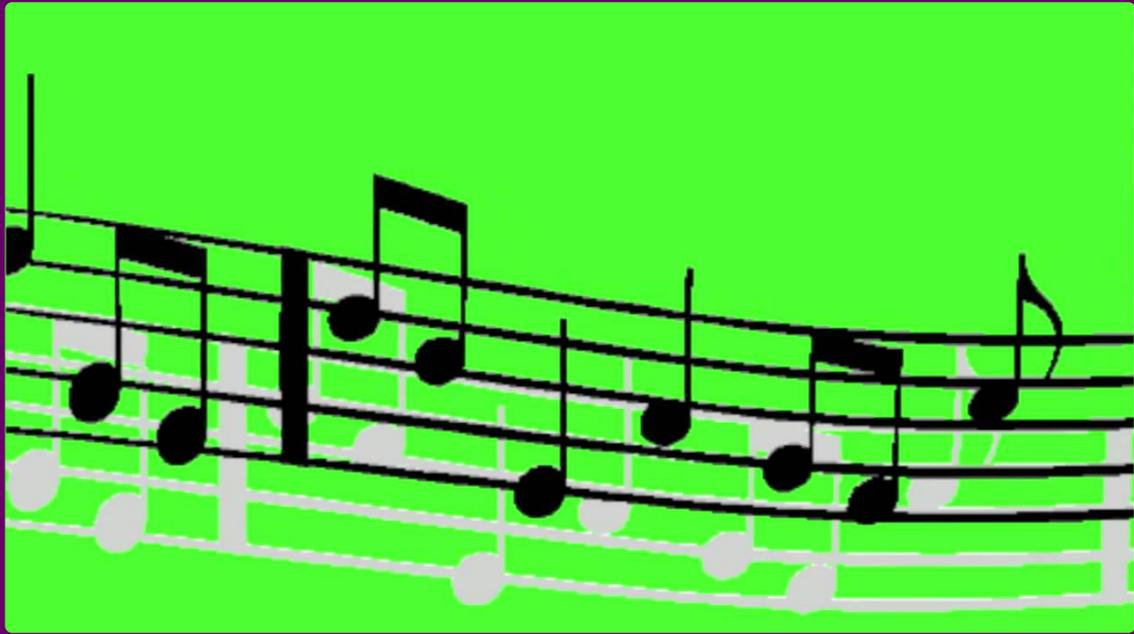
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## External links

- [PiratesInfo.com biography](#)
- [Biography of Roberts](#) at the [Wayback Machine](#) (archived October 28, 2009)
- [Biography of Bartholomew Roberts](#)
- [BBC Article \(Welsh\)](#)
- [Famous Welsh Article](#)

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- Beyonce
- Bruno Mars
- Chris Brown
- Coldplay
- Drake
- Ed Sheeran
- Gorillaz
- Jay-Z

Captain Bartholomew Roberts' first official order was to avenge Captain Davis' death. Charles Bronson style. Screaming into battle with two flintlock pistols and a terrifying-looking cutlass Black Bart led his men storming into town, destroyed the garrison, threw all the fort's cannons into the ocean, shelled the town with a couple broadsides of raking cannon fire, and set three Portuguese trading ships ablaze in the harbor on his way out of town. Bartholomew Roberts was described as a tall, an attractive man, who loved the expensive clothes and jewelry. He was often seen dressed in a gorgeous crimson waistcoat with an expensive hat which had a unique red feather. Even in battles he was well-dressed. On his chests, there was a heavy gold chain with a diamond cross hanging to it. He was born in South Wales, and his real name was John Roberts. Since his youth, he had been on many ships, preparing for a marine life.

Bartholomew Roberts, also known as Black Bart, was a Welsh pirate who operated in the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean from 1719 to 1722. Black Bart was easily the most successful pirate of the Golden Age of Piracy, having been known to have captured over 400 ships in his day. The son of George Roberts of Little Newcastle, Wales, John Roberts was born May 17, 1682. Going to sea at 13, Roberts appears to have worked in the merchant service until 1719. For some reason during this time Roberts changed Bartholomew Roberts, pirate captain of a succession of ships—the “Royal Rover,” “Fortune,” “Royal Fortune,” and “Good Fortune”—who burned and plundered ships from the coasts of West Africa to the coasts of Brazil and the Caribbean and as far north as Newfoundland. His conquests are said to have Bartholomew Roberts (1682 – 1722), born John Roberts, was a Welsh pirate and Sage, who raided ships in the Caribbean and on the West African coast between 1719 and 1722. He is regarded by many historians to be the most successful pirate of the Golden Age of Piracy, judging by the number of ships taken and the amount of goods stolen. For his actions, he earned the moniker Black Bart, although the name was never used in his lifetime. His death is often considered to be when the Golden Age of Piracy