

## DAVIES, JOHN BREESE (1893 - 1940, writer, musician, and a specialist in cerdd dant

**Name:** John Breese Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1893  
**Date of death:** 1940  
**Parent:** Elisabeth Davies (née Breese)  
**Parent:** Thomas Tegwyn Davies  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** writer, musician, and a specialist in cerdd dant  
**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Literature and Writing; Music  
**Authors:** Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate, Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born 22 February 1893 at Gwynfryn, Dinas Mawddwy, Meirionnydd, son of **Thomas Tegwyn Davies**, author of *Dinas Mawddwy a'i hamgylchoedd* (1893). His mother, Elizabeth, was of the Breese family of Llanbryn-mair. He attended Dinas Mawddwy Elementary School and Dolgellau Grammar School until an illness kept him bedridden for five years and left him lame for the rest of his life. During his confinement he read extensively, thereby acquainting himself not only with the history and literature of Wales, but also with the languages and literature of other countries. During this period **Sir Owen M. Edwards** paid him a visit and urged him to write for his magazine, *Cymru*. He complied, and continued all his life to enrich Welsh literature, while at the same time he cultivated himself by attending summer schools in Wales and England and the extra-mural classes of Aberystwyth college in Dinas. He lived with his sister at Minllyn, Dinas Mawddwy (where they kept a shop), and both of them assiduously supported the culture of their district.

His reputation will probably rest chiefly on his literary work. He wrote constantly to the chief Welsh periodicals; one may single out his essay on **R. J. Derfel** (*Y Geninen*, 1924) and his articles in *Cymru (O.M.E.)* on **Emrys ab Iwan**, 1923, and on **Alun**, 1924, as well as a number of articles in *Yr Eurgrawn* and *Y Cerddor*. A selection of them were published in *Ysgrifau John Breese Davies* (1949). He wrote with a good style and economy of expression, showing artistic skill and many of the virtues of the true scholar. He was secretary of the literature committee for the national *eisteddfod* at Machynlleth in 1937, and his essay on the Dyfi district as an introduction to the list of competitions for that *eisteddfod* was a masterpiece of its kind. Even so, his greatest eisteddfodic achievement was to ensure that a competition for a Literature Medal be included from 1938 onwards. He worked equally energetically - as a tutor, adjudicator and conductor - to establish the highest standards possible for the traditional singing to harp accompaniment, and strove hard to secure its recognition at the national eisteddfod. He and J.E. Jones were considered to be the chief benefactors of their day in this field. He was one of the founders of the Cerdd Dant Society and edited its magazine, *Allwedd y Tannau*, from its first issue till 1940. He was prominent in the life of his district, being a member of Meirionnydd county council, and was one of the main supports of education (school and adult) in the area, the chairman of the governors of Dolgellau Grammar School, president and secretary of the Council of Free Churches of Dyfi valley, and steward of Dinas Mawddwy Methodist circuit. He died 4 October 1940. Breese Davies was exceptionally well-liked; he was a good example of Welsh culture at its highest level.

### Authors

**Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate**, (1901 - 1982)

**Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins**, (1881 - 1969)

### Sources

*Yr Eurgrawn Wesleyaidd*, August 1941

*Allwedd y Tannau Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Cerdd Dant Cymru*, no. 5, 1942

Robin Gwyndaf, 'Cyfraniad John Breese Davies i Gerdd Dant' in *Allwedd y Tannau Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Cerdd Dant Cymru*, 32 (1973), 10-24, a survey of a collection of his MSS, in the Museum of Welsh Life  
personal acquaintance

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