

## GRIFFITH, Sir SAMUEL WALKER (1845 - 1920), judge, etc., in Australia

**Name:** Samuel Walker Griffith  
**Date of birth:** 1845  
**Date of death:** 1920  
**Parent:** Mary Griffith (née Walker)  
**Parent:** Edward Griffith  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** judge  
**Area of activity:** Law  
**Author:** John Oliver Stephens

Born at Merthyr Tydfil 21 June 1845, the son of Edward Griffith, minister of the English Independent church there (1842-5), and Mary, daughter of Peter Walker of Swansea.

Sailing to Australia (1854) with his family, Edward Griffith later became pastor of the Congregational church in Ipswich, near Brisbane. After a brilliant career at the university of Sydney, Samuel Griffith was admitted, in 1867, as a barrister-at-law of the supreme court of Queensland. In 1872 he entered Parliament, became premier in 1883, and was in the Legislative Assembly for twenty-one years. In 1893 he was appointed chief justice of Queensland. His polemical life centered around two issues, the overthrow of pastoralist oligarchy and the preservation of white Australia, the latter issue being occasioned by the malpractices in the recruiting of 'Kanaka' or Melanesian labour. His strong advocacy secured the annexation of New Guinea and led to the Queensland Defence Act of 1884.

In 1887, at the Empire conference in London, he voiced his views on empire unity. In 1891, as chairman of the Sydney convention for the federation of the Australian colonies, he drafted the constitution and until it was made law by the British Parliament, in 1900, he took a most active part in its completion.

In 1913 he received the degree of LL.D. 'honoris causa' from the university of Wales. He died 9 August 1920, at 'Merthyr,' his home in Brisbane. The Welsh library of the Brisbane Cymmrodorion is a memorial to him as its first patron.

### Author

Reverend Professor John Oliver Stephens, (1880 - 1957)

### Sources

*An Australian National Biography* (Melbourne 1934)

*The Australian Encyclopaedia* (Australia 1926-27)

Douglas Graham, *Macrossan Lecture* (Brisbane 1939)

A. E. Piddington, *Worshipful Masters* (Sydney 1929)

J. J. Knight, *In the Early Days history and incident of pioneer Queensland* (Brisbane 1895), contains an account, with portrait, of his father

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Samuel Griffith](#)

### Additional Links

VIAF: [8278374](#)

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