

## DAVIES, CATHERINE GLYN ('CARYL') (1926-2007), historian of philosophy and linguistics, and translator

**Name:** Catherine Glyn Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1926  
**Date of death:** 2007  
**Spouse:** Gareth Alban Davies  
**Child:** Gwen Davies  
**Child:** Catrin Davies  
**Child:** Eleri Davies  
**Child:** Rhodri Davies  
**Parent:** Mabel Jones (née Williams Lloyd)  
**Parent:** William Glyn Jones  
**Gender:** Female  
**Occupation:** historian of philosophy and linguistics, and translator  
**Area of activity:** History and Culture; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Mary Burdett Jones

Caryl Davies was born in Trealaw, Glamorgan, on 26 September 1926, the eldest child of the minister William Glyn Jones (1883-1958) and his wife Mabel (née Williams Lloyd, born 1897). They married in 1925 and had a son and two further daughters. After attending Porth county school, Caryl graduated with first-class honours in French in 1946 and later with honours in philosophy from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. She obtained a University of Wales studentship and again in Aberystwyth she graduated MA in 1949 for a thesis 'A critical study of John Locke's examination of Père Malebranche's opinion of seeing all things in God'. In 1948 she was awarded the Kemsley travelling fellowship of the University of Wales which enabled her to spend a year at the Sorbonne, Paris, studying the philosophic relations between England and France in the later seventeenth century. She then studied in Somerville College, Oxford, and wrote 'The influence of John Locke on literature and thought in eighteenth century France: a study of Locke's influence on the development of the theory of knowledge in France between 1734 and 1748' (1954), a step on the way to her doctorate. There she met Gareth Alban Davies (1926-2009). They married in 1952 and although she brought up their four children, Eleri, Rhodri, Catrin and Gwen, in Otley, Yorkshire, she sought to pass on to them their Welsh-language heritage. With her husband she translated André Gide's novel *La Symphonie pastorale* under the title *Y Deillion* (1965).

After her husband retired from the chair of Spanish in Leeds in 1986, they moved to Blaenpant, a former schoolroom near Llangwryfon, Ceredigion, where they used to spend summer holidays, pursuing their research in the National Library of Wales. Caryl had continued to work on her doctorate, and she was awarded a PhD by Leeds University in 1989 for a thesis which was published in 1990. *Conscience as Consciousness: the idea of self-awareness in French philosophical writing from Descartes to Diderot* contains a concise but comprehensive discussion which is often referred to.

A considerable linguist, she translated from Russian L. N. Tolstoy's *The Cossacks*, *Y Cosaciaid* (1998) and discussed A. Chekov's 'The Student' in two articles (1994-5). In 2000 she published an important volume on the history of Celtic scholarship, *Adfeillion Babel: agweddau ar syniadaeth ieithyddol y ddeunawfed ganrif*, tracing the development of the ideas of grammarians, lexicographers and linguists regarding the beginnings and development of language and the inter-relationship of languages. She discussed the attitudes which stemmed from classical and Biblical sources such as those of **John Davies**, Mallwyd, and **Edward Lhuyd**, and the influence of continental scholars such as Pezron and Leibniz on the thinking of the period leading up to the discovery by **Sir William Jones** (1746-1794) of the inter-relationship of Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. She set the studies of the Welshmen in a European context.

She wrote well in Welsh and English. Her unassuming nature hid another talent, writing haikus in Welsh and English. She had a quiet humour and also considerable determination as she continued to work despite problems with her eyesight. With her silver hair, she remained pretty till the end of her life.

She died suddenly in hospital in Aberystwyth on 22 February 2007 from septicaemia after a ruptured gastric ulcer. After a service in Tabor chapel, Llangwryfon, she was cremated in Aberystwyth Crematorium.

### Author

Mary Burdett Jones

### Sources

Obituary by Meic Stephens in *The Independent*, 17 March 2007

*World War One Diary of William Glyn Jones*, Salonika, May to October 1918 People's Collection Wales website, viewed 24 March 2015

*The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, Aberdŵr*, IV., p. 19 (includes a photograph)

Richard Aaron's report on the Philosophy Department in 'Reports submitted to the Court of Governors, University College of Wales Aberystwyth 25 October 1949, p.49, viewed 24 March 2015 - search for 'Miss Catherine G. Jones'

letter from David Coward, 7 June 1990 (private collection)

information from the family and personal acquaintance

Her papers are in the National Library of Wales

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Catherine Glyn Davies](#)

### Additional Links

VIAF: [39423231](#)

Wikidata: [Q23511510](#)

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