

DAVIES, JOHN SALMON (1940 - 2016), scientist

Name: John Salmon Davies
Date of birth: 1940
Date of death: 2016
Spouse: Ann Davies (née Jones)
Child: Eleri Davies
Child: Meinir Davies
Parent: Megan Davies
Parent: Theophilus Salmon Davies
Gender: Male
Occupation: scientist
Area of activity: Science and Mathematics
Author: Neville Evans

John Davies was born on 7 June 1940 at St. Dogmael's, Cardiganshire, the son of Theophilus Salmon Davies and his wife Megan (née Davies). He was born at his mother's home, but was raised in Trelech, Carmarthenshire, where his father was a blacksmith before turning to farming.

John attended Trelech Primary School and then Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Carmarthen where he first became interested in science. He studied chemistry at the University College of Wales, Swansea, graduating with first class honours in 1960. He stayed at Swansea to complete a research programme under the supervision of Professor Cedric Hassall, and was awarded a Ph.D. for a thesis entitled 'Specific Cleavage of Peptides' in 1963. He spent the following year as research fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the USA. In 1964 he returned to take up a lectureship at the university in Swansea where he spent the remainder of his career up to his retirement as Senior Lecturer in 2007. He served as Head of Department of Chemistry and Dean of the Science Faculty, and was respected by students and colleagues for the thoroughness of his preparation and his patient and firm nature.

John married Ann Jones in 1964, and they made their home in Killay, Swansea. They had two daughters, Eleri and Meinir.

Within the field of organic chemistry his research specialism was peptides, compounds based on amino acids which occur naturally in the human body, especially in skin cells. With the support of groups of researchers over several years, John worked on reforming the structure of peptides, thereby making them more attractive to the pharmaceutical industry. He was an acknowledged author with over 60 research papers, and as a result of his expertise he acted as Chief Editor (1993-2006) of 'Amino Acids, Peptides and Proteins', periodic specialist reports of the Royal Society of Chemistry, as Secretary (1994-2000) to the European Peptide Society, and as Secretary (1992-2009) to the European Symposium on Bio-organic Chemistry which was held annually at Gregynog. He also did much to stimulate public interest in chemistry, contributing enthusiastically to FSC outreach activities such as the 'Chemical Olympiad'.

In addition to his professional career in chemistry, John was committed to promoting the use of Welsh in science as a member of the Central Science Panel of the National Eisteddfod and through activities with the Urdd and in schools. Throughout his life he was a regular contributor to Welsh-language science journals, such as *Y Gwyddonydd*, *Atom*, *Delta* and *Gwerddon*. He also pioneered the provision of Welsh-medium teaching within chemistry courses at Swansea University. For this work and much else he was awarded the Science and Technology Medal of the National Eisteddfod held in the Vale of Glamorgan in 2012.

John was a very sociable man, and he contributed a great deal to his local community in Swansea. He was secretary of Bethel Independent Chapel, Sketty, for over 30 years, and with others he campaigned for the establishment of a second Welsh-medium secondary school in West Glamorgan, a campaign which resulted in the opening of Gŵyr Comprehensive School in 1984. He was then a member of the school's Governing Body for many years, being its Chairman at the time of his sudden death.

John Davies died on 22 January 2016, and his funeral was held at Swansea crematorium on 4 February with a memorial service in Bethel chapel, Sketty, on the same day. His remains were buried in the cemetery of Penllergaer Church.

Author

Neville Evans

Sources

Personal knowledge and information from the family

Additional Links

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