

DAVIES, Sir ALUN TALFAN (1913 - 2000), barrister, judge, politician, publisher and businessman

Name: Alun Talfan Davies

Date of birth: 1913

Date of death: 2000

Gender: Male

Occupation: barrister, judge, politician, publisher and businessman

Area of activity: Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Printing and Publishing; Business and Industry

Author: John P. Lethbridge

Alun Talfan Davies was born on 22 July 1913 in Gorseinon near Swansea, the youngest of four sons of William Talfan Davies (1873-1938), a Methodist minister, and his wife Alys (née Jones, 1879-1948). The older brothers were Elfyn Talfan Davies, [Aneirin Talfan Davies](#), and Goronwy Talfan Davies.

Alun was educated at Gowerton Grammar School, then studied law at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. In 1939 he was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn. A *Western Mail* picture shows him wearing spectacles, and poor eyesight is probably why he did not do military service in the Second World War.

On 25 July 1942 he married Eiluned Christopher Williams (1914-2003) in London. They made their home in Penarth, and had four children: Helen Talfan Davies, Janet Lyn Talfan Davies (who married the rugby international Barry John), Christopher Humphrey Talfan Davies, and Kathryn Elizabeth Talfan Davies.

Alun Talfan Davies was made QC in 1961 and knighted in 1976. He was appointed Recorder of Merthyr Tydfil in 1963; of Swansea in 1969; and later that year of Cardiff; was Honorary Cardiff Recorder and a Crown Court Recorder 1972-1983; Deputy Chair of Cardigan Quarter Sessions 1963-1971; sat on the Channel Islands Appeal Court, and on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

He did much legal work for the National Union of Mineworkers, and in September 1959 his pamphlet *The Casualties of Industry - A Plea for Justice for Miners* appeared. In the same year he represented the Light Railway Transport League's unsuccessful protest against the Mumbles Railway closure, and forty three Welsh councils protesting at increased bus fares. In 1962 a Nigerian chief accused of treason escaped to Britain but was extradited. Alun Talfan Davies defended him at his 1963 trial. The chief got life imprisonment, but was released in 1966. In 1968 Alun prosecuted Free Wales Army members accused of possessing explosives, which they claimed were for salmon poaching. He was involved in several homicide trials, including a racially sensitive one in 1971. In the wake of the Aberfan disaster of 1966 he represented Merthyr Tydfil Council at the inquiry, and from 1967 to 1990 he chaired the trust responsible for £1.75 million of charitable funds.

He was a member of Plaid Cymru in the 1930s, but could not accept the anti-war stance of [Saunders Lewis](#) and stood as an Independent candidate in the 1943 University of Wales parliamentary by-election, coming third behind the successful Liberal candidate [W. J. Gruffydd](#) and Saunders Lewis. He tried unsuccessfully to get the Liberal nomination for Cardiganshire in the general election of July 1945. In the October 1959 and 1964 general elections he was the Liberal candidate for Carmarthenshire, but the sitting Labour MP [Lady Megan Lloyd George](#) twice defeated him. At the 1966 general election he came second at Denbigh to [Geraint Morgan](#), the sitting Conservative MP. He chaired the Welsh Liberals 1963-1966.

Alun Talfan Davies was strongly in favour of devolution, and a motion proposed by him supporting Welsh devolution was passed at the 1958 Liberal conference in Torquay. From 1969 to 1973 he sat on the Royal Commission on the Constitution which proposed devolution for Scotland and Wales and regional government in England. He was a member of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs Board 1985-1992.

The Welsh language and its culture was very important to him. He was vice-chair of the National Eisteddfod Executive in 1944, and from 1977 to 1980 was President of its Court. In 1940 he and his brother Aneirin founded the Welsh-language publishing house Llyfrau'r Dryw (later known as Christopher Davies Ltd after it was taken over by his son) which published the Welsh periodical *Barn* from 1962 onwards. He sat on the Welsh National Opera Board 1978-1980, the University of Wales Court 1969-1988, and its Swansea and Aberystwyth Colleges' governing bodies. In 1971 he was made an Honorary Professorial Fellow of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and in 1973 the University of Wales awarded him an honorary doctorate of law.

He took a keen interest in television, and was a director of Harlech TV 1967-1983, serving as vice-chair under the chairmanship of [Lord Harlech](#), and chairing its Welsh Board 1978-1983. A close associate of [Sir Julian Hodge](#), he was a director of the Commercial Bank of Wales from 1971 to 1996, serving as deputy chair 1973-1991 and chair 1991-1996. He was also a director of the Cardiff World Trade Centre 1985-1997. He was a co-founder of the Welsh Portrait Sculpture Trust in 1980, and he and others successfully campaigned to save Dinefwr Park and Castle.

Sir Alun Talfan Davies died on 11 November 2000 in a nursing home in Penarth. Some of his papers are in the National Library of Wales, which also holds a portrait of him by John Elwyn.

Author

John P. Lethbridge

Sources

Who was who?

Western Mail, 13 November 2000

The Times, 2 March 1972, 28 December 2000

Ancestry

The General Register Office

The British Newspaper Archive

Further reading

Meic Stephens, *The Independent*, 13 November 2000, reprinted in *Necrologies. A Book of Welsh Obituaries* (2008)

NLW Archives: [Papurau Syr Alun Talfan Davies](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Alun Talfan Davies](#)

Images

Geoff Charles, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 1944, Llandybie

Geoff Charles, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru 1979, Caernarfon

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