

## DAVIES, JOHN GLYN (1870 - 1953), scholar, songwriter and poet

**Name:** John Glyn Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1870  
**Date of death:** 1953  
**Spouse:** Hettie Davies (née Williams)  
**Parent:** Gwen Davies (née Jones)  
**Parent:** John Davies  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** scholar, songwriter and poet  
**Area of activity:** Literature and Writing; Music; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** Robert Geraint Gruffydd

Born 22 October 1870 at 55 Peel St., Sefton Park, Liverpool, son of John and Gwen Davies. His father was a tea merchant, and his mother was a daughter of [John Jones](#), Taly-sarn; [George Maitland Lloyd Davies](#), Stanley Davies and Captain Frank Davies were his brothers. He was educated at the Liverpool Institute. He worked with the sailing boat companies Rathbone Brothers (1887-92) and The Cambrian (1892-95), with Henry Tate and Sons (1895-96) and then with the Mines Corporation of New Zealand (1896-98). After returning home (via the U.S.A.) he was persuaded by [Thomas Edward Ellis](#) and others to bring together a Welsh library at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, which could later form the nucleus of a National Library of Wales. He commenced the task at Aberystwyth in 1899, but after much labour he became dissatisfied with his terms of employment. In 1907 he was appointed to the staff of the library of the University of Liverpool and later as assistant to Professor Kuno Meyer in the Celtic department of the University. When Meyer retired in 1920, Glyn Davies was appointed head of the department and remained in that post until he retired in 1936; he lived at Mostyn and Denbigh. After retiring he lived at Cambridge, Llandegfan, Llannarth, Cardiganshire, and at Llanfairfechan where he died 11 November 1953. He married, 18 July 1908, Hettie Williams, Newquay, Cardiganshire, and they had a son and three daughters.

Despite his undisputed abilities and his promising early work, his contribution to Welsh scholarship proved to be erratic and uneven. However, his songs for children in *Cerddi Huw Puw* (1923), *Cerddi Robin Goch* (1935) and *Cerddi Portinllaen* (1936), many of which are based on sailors' songs he had heard during his youth, bear the marks of a genius. His posthumous book of poems, *Cerddi Edern a cherddi ereill* (1955), contains many lyrics which will undoubtedly live. One could add that his reminiscences of the Welsh society he knew early in life, and his comments on it, are always interesting and very penetrating.

### Author

Professor Robert Geraint Gruffydd

### Sources

Hettie Glyn Davies, *Hanes bywyd John Glyn Davies, 1870-1953* (Liverpool 1965)

NLW Archives: [J. Glyn Davies Papers](#)

### Additional Links

Delyth G. Morgans Phillips, 'Davies, J. Glyn (1870-1953)', *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru* (Talybont 2018), pp.138-139

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