

## DAVIES, DAVID JAMES (1893 - 1956), economist

**Name:** David James Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1893  
**Date of death:** 1956  
**Spouse:** Noëlle Davies (née Ffrench)  
**Parent:** Ellen Davies (née Williams)  
**Parent:** Thomas Davies  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** economist  
**Area of activity:** Economics and Money  
**Author:** Ceinwen Hannah Thomas

Born 2 June 1893 at Cefnmwng, a small cottage near Carmel, Carmarthenshire, the 3rd child of Thomas Davies, miner, and Ellen (née Williams). After attending local schools, he worked in several collieries and at Barry Dock (1907-12). In the meantime he continued his education in evening classes and through correspondence courses. In 1912 he emigrated to the U.S.A. and Canada where he worked in the mines and, with others, established the Northwestern Coal and Coke Co., Steamboat Springs, Colorado. He travelled widely in America and visited China and Japan; he also found time for boxing and studying law at the Universities of Seattle and Pueblo. In 1918 he joined the U.S. Navy and trained as an engineer but returned to Wales in 1919 (being discharged from the Navy in 1920). He worked for a short period as a collier in Llandybïe, until he was incapacitated by a serious accident in 1919. He utilised his enforced leisure reading and studying economics, politics and the history of the Working Class Movement. He was a founder member of the Labour Party in the Ammanford district. His attitude towards the relationship between socialism and nationalism changed completely in 1924 after he attended the International People's College, Elsinore, Denmark (where he met **Noëlle Ffrench** of Bushy Park, Co. Roscommon, Ireland, whom he married, 2 June 1925) and the Folk High School, Vestbirk, Denmark. He came to believe that true internationalism was based on co-operation between free nations, while the advancement of the Welsh working class could only be secured in a free Wales. This point of view was expressed months before the Welsh Nationalist Party (now Plaid Cymru) was founded in 1925, while he was unaware of the existence of a nationalist movement in Wales. He returned from Denmark a convinced nationalist in favour of an economic policy of co-operation which placed ownership and control of the means of production in the hands of the workers themselves.

After an unsuccessful attempt at establishing a folk school in Ireland in 1924-25, he entered U.C.W., Aberystwyth, where he graduated (B.A.) in economics in 1928, M.A. (1930), Ph.D. (1931). He won several prizes at the national eisteddfod on political and economic subjects (1930, 1931, 1932 - an essay which was published as *The economic history of South Wales prior to 1800* (1933) - and 1933). He became a leading member of Plaid Cymru and rendered great service to the Party as a researcher and author of pamphlets and articles which he contributed regularly to all of the movement's publications, e.g. *The economics of Welsh self-government* (1931), *Towards an economic democracy* (1949), *Can Wales afford self-government?* (with **Noëlle Davies**, 1938, 1947), *Cymoedd tan gwmwl* (with **Noëlle Davies**, 1938), *Diwydiant a masnach* (1946). He was conscious of the necessity to reach out to the English-speaking population and took a prominent part in the decision to transfer the Party's head office from Caernarfon to Cardiff in 1944.

In 1932 he and his wife bought Pantybeiliau mansion at Gilwern, near Bryn-mawr, Monmouth, and attempted to establish a folk school there. Although they failed to realise their ambition, they became interested in the dispute concerning the legal status of Monmouthshire. They lost no opportunity in demonstrating that it had always been an integral part of Wales.

He died 11 October 1956 and was buried in Carmel (B) graveyard in the village where he was born.

### Author

Ceinwen Hannah Thomas

### Sources

personal knowledge

D. J. Davies (with a memoir by C.H.T.), *Towards Welsh freedom* (Cardiff 1958)

### Further Reading

NLW Archives: [The General Election 1950. Parliamentary Division of Rhondda East. Vote for David Davies \(The Welsh Nationalist Candidate\)](#)

NLW Archives: [Rhondda East Parliamentary Division. General Election February 23rd, 1950. David Davies](#)

NLW Archives: [Voice of Wales. Parliament for Wales... David Davies](#)

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