

## CHARLES, BERTIE GEORGE (1908-2000), scholar and archivist

**Name:** Bertie George Charles  
**Date of birth:** 1908  
**Date of death:** 2000  
**Spouse:** Mary Charles  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** scholar and archivist  
**Area of activity:** History and Culture; Scholarship and Languages  
**Author:** John Graham Jones

He was born 13 February 1908 at Penparc, near Trefin in Pembrokeshire. He was brought up at Tresinwen Farm and educated at Henner elementary school and Fishguard County School, where he was taught by [D. J. Williams](#) as his English master. In the autumn of 1926 he entered the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, to study English, and graduated with an exceptionally good first class honours degree in June 1929. In 1930 he was awarded a university studentship to undertake research work and in 1932 was awarded the MA degree of the University of Wales *with distinction* for a thesis on 'Norse Relations in Wales'. This work was subsequently published by the University of Wales Press Board in 1934 and was notably well received. Meanwhile Bertie Charles, the recipient of a prestigious University of Wales Fellowship, had proceeded to the University of London where he undertook further research work on the place-names of Pembrokeshire for the degree of Ph.D. awarded him in 1935 and subsequently published, in a much expanded form, as *Non-Celtic Place-names in Wales* by the University of London in 1938. Again the reviews were highly complimentary. By this time Charles had in 1936 taken up a position within the Department of Manuscripts and Records in the National Library of Wales. His career was interrupted by war service, but he returned to his post, now re-graded 'Assistant Keeper I', in 1945. He was to remain in this position until his retirement in the spring of 1973.

During his long professional career Bertie Charles produced scholarly catalogues of a large number of archive groups comprising mainly deeds and documents from the mediaeval and early modern periods. At the National Library he earned deep respect as an accomplished palaeographer, witty raconteur and dedicated pioneering trades union official. He also applied himself with vigour to his research work, completing a number of ambitious research projects. Until 1953 he published a number of articles in academic journals. In 1967 there appeared the *Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest, 1539-1660*, published as volume XXIV of the distinguished University of Wales History and Law Series under the auspices of the University's Board of Celtic Studies. The records had been deposited at the National Library in 1948 and subsequently listed by Dr Charles. Six years later, in 1973, Dr Charles's retirement year, there appeared the magisterial tome *George Owen of Henllys: a Welsh Elizabethan*, the final product of decades of research, re-thinking and re-writing, and refined synthesis. In retirement he pressed on with his researches with renewed energy. In 1982 the Pembrokeshire Historical Society undertook the publication of his *The English Dialect of South Pembrokeshire: Introduction and Word-List*, a short monograph running to fifty-four pages. Dr Charles's most substantial work *The Place-names of Pembrokeshire*, published in 1992 when its compiler was aged 85 years of age, ran to two substantial volumes, totalling no fewer than 867 pages. It was undoubtedly a monumental labour of love and truly a lifetime's work. Outside his work, Dr Charles's main pastime was playing golf, an interest which he shared with his devoted wife May. They had two daughters, and made their home at Tresinwen, Cae'r Gog Terrace, Aberystwyth. Mary Charles died in 1998. B.G. Charles died in Cwmcynfelin Home 19 August 2000 and was cremated at Aberystwyth Crematorium.

### Author

Dr John Graham Jones

### Sources

*The National Library of Wales Journal*  
Yr Angor, October 2000  
personal knowledge  
information received from Mr Daniel Huws

### Additional Links

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