

## DAVIES, ALUN HERBERT (CREUNANT) (1927-2005), the first director of the Welsh Books Council

**Name:** Alun Herbert (Creunant) Davies

**Date of birth:** 1927

**Date of death:** 2005

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** the first director of the Welsh Books Council

**Area of activity:** Education; Literature and Writing; Printing and Publishing

**Author:** Gwerfyl Pierce Jones

Alun Herbert Davies was born on 31 May 1927 in Llansamlet, Glamorgan (he adopted the name Creunant later), the only son of the Reverend Thomas Herbert (Creunant) Davies and Hannah Davies (née Thomas). The family moved to Pumsaint in Carmarthenshire in 1936 and Alun received his secondary education in Llandoverly. Following the untimely death of his father, he continued his education at Trinity College, Carmarthen, and after two years' military service began his career as a teacher in Tregaron and then moved to Llangeitho as a young head teacher in 1952.

In 1957 he married Megan (née Davies) from Penrhiw-Ilan, Ceredigion, a school teacher, and they had two children, Gwenan (born 1962) and Deian (born 1968). His roots were firmly embedded in Ceredigion by this time. Both he and his wife immersed themselves in the local community and contributed tirelessly to all kinds of voluntary activities. He was a keen supporter of Urdd Gobaith Cymru (the Welsh League of Youth) and served as chairman of its Council in due course. He also played a prominent role in the establishment and development of Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC), the Welsh teachers' union, and served as its General Secretary for five years and as a trustee for twenty years. His contribution was such that many a wag suggested that the AC in the acronym of the union's name stood for Alun Creunant!

By this time he had already gained a reputation as an energetic and charismatic young man who possessed excellent communication and promotional skills and a growing aptitude for administration. Such skills made him an ideal candidate for the post of full-time organiser of the Welsh Books Council, a new institution which had been set up in 1961 through the unstinting efforts of a number of enthusiastic campaigners, the most prominent of whom was Alun R. Edwards, the indefatigable librarian of Cardiganshire. Widely recognised as the main founder of the Welsh Books Council, he provided a home for the Council at his office in Ceredigion Library until the work had increased sufficiently to justify employing a full-time organiser.

Alun Creunant Davies took up his position on St David's Day, 1 March 1965. During his period of office (1965-1987) the Books Council became an important and influential institution in the field of Welsh-language publishing. He persuaded local authorities and subsequently the Welsh Arts Council (as it was then called) to fund the institution and he then began the major task of developing the book trade in Wales. Among his many achievements were the establishment of a wholesale operation for publishers and booksellers, the introduction of specialist services to help publishers improve standards of book production (with the assistance of Meic Stephens, Literature Director of the Welsh Arts Council at the time) and the extension of the Books Council's remit to include the distribution of grants to improve and extend the publishing output. This latter development heralded the beginning of a relationship with the Welsh Office and the Government which would prove to be transformative in later years. As the work expanded and developed, it was not always plain sailing and he faced fierce opposition from some quarters of the book trade from time to time, especially when the Books Council was charged with the responsibility for administering grants to publishers. Tensions boiled over into the press and the bickering was reflected in media coverage at that time. While he was genuinely hurt by some of the fiercest criticism, he stood his ground and succeeded in persuading the vast majority that the Books Council and publishers were on the same side. It is worth noting that he had staunch supporters too, many of whom were authors, librarians and the general reading public across Wales.

In Alun Creunant Davies, the Welsh Books Council had unquestionably appointed the right person at the right time and his missionary zeal and abounding energy were quite extraordinary. On his retirement in 1987, the Books Council had a staff complement of 36, an annual turnover of £1.7 million and was the owner of its two buildings - Castell Brychan on a hill above Aberystwyth and the Distribution Centre on the Glanyrafon Industrial Estate in Llanbadarn Fawr. Firm foundations had been set for future development.

Notwithstanding his contribution to the field of books and reading, he also served his society and nation in numerous other fields. He was a Justice of the Peace and chairman of the north Cardiganshire Magistrates. He served on the Court and Council of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, the National Library of Wales and the National Museum of Wales. He was also a member of the Development Board for Rural Wales. It is worth noting that he was able to do all this and more in addition to running the Books Council. While his daytime commitments were heavy, the relative freedom and flexibility which existed at that time were a bonus to the many bodies which benefited from his advice and support. His services as a committee member were much in demand. This was due in no small part to his loyalty and his supportive and positive nature. While he was never a yes-man and was prepared to voice dissent when necessary, he was never difficult for the sake of being difficult and would express his opinions eloquently and succinctly and often with a touch of humour.

Apart from the field of books and publishing, his other great passion was religion and he gave freely of his time and talents to serve his church, his denomination and wider religious organisations. He was a devout Christian, an ordained elder with the Presbyterian Church of Wales (since 1956) and a popular and much revered lay preacher. He held the highest offices in his denomination: Moderator of the Association in the South in 1980, Moderator of the General Assembly (1993-94) and treasurer of the denomination. He also served on a number of committees and boards including the Sunday Schools Council, Christian Aid (in Wales and the UK) and the Bible Society. According to Richard H. Morgan in a tribute in the Welsh-language periodical *Cristion* he was equally powerful when preaching the Word in the pulpits of rural Ceredigion as he was fighting the corner of Wales in meetings of the Bible Society in Swindon.

In his role as director of the Welsh Books Council he persuaded the various church denominations to cease publishing separate denominational periodicals in favour of a single interdenominational publication. This was no mean feat. However, the leaders of the denominations knew and respected the man and could therefore appreciate that the Books Council's threat to withdraw financial support from the individual periodicals was not an attempt to reduce funding but to ensure a stronger and more sustainable publication which merited public funding. There is no doubt that *Cristion* came into being as a result of his efforts and powers of persuasion. And later, following his retirement, he played a key role in the publishing arrangements of many major religious works, including a new version of the Welsh Bible (*Y Beibl Cymraeg Newydd*) in 1988, the Revised Version (Argraffiad Diwygiedig) in 2004, a Concordance to the Welsh Bible (*Mynegair i'r Beibl Cymraeg Newydd*) in 1998 and the interdenominational Welsh hymn-book (*Caneuon Ffydd*) in 2001.

He received an honorary MA from the University of Wales in 1987 and was made a Fellow of the University of Wales Aberystwyth in 2004. In presenting him for the degree of MA, R. Geraint Gruffydd noted his substantial physical stature and cited the satirical magazine *Lol* which often referred to him as 'yr C Fawr' ('the big C'). He went on to say, however, that his actions throughout his career had proved unequivocally that he was a man of a different and far greater stature. It could be added that he was the most gentle of giants who gave a lifetime of service to his country and nation.

He died from cancer at Bronglais hospital, Aberystwyth, on 26 October 2005 (just eight months after the death of his wife Megan on 20 February 2005). His funeral was held on 31 October at Capel y Morfa and Aberystwyth Crematorium where his ashes were buried. A portrait of him by David Griffiths hangs at the headquarters of the Books Council at Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth.

### Author

Gwerfyl Pierce Jones

### Sources

*The Independent*, 28 October 2005

Meic Stephens, *Necrologies. A Book of Welsh Obituaries* (2008), 198-201

*Y Goleuad*, 2 December 2005

*Barn*, December/January 2005/06

Richard Morgan and Pryderi Llwyd Jones, *Cofio Alun Creunant Davies, Cristion* (January/February 2006)

Welsh Books Council Annual Reports (1965-1987)

Personal knowledge

### Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q20732620](#)

**Published date:** 2012-08-08

**Article Copyright:** <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

[PDF](#) [Print](#) [Cite](#)

The Dictionary of Welsh Biography is provided by The National Library of Wales and the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It is free to use and does not receive grant support. A donation would help us maintain and improve the site so that we can continue to acknowledge Welsh men and women who have made notable contributions to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).



#### APA Citation



Jones, G. P., (2012). DAVIES, ALUN HERBERT (CREUNANT) (1927-2005), the first director of the Welsh Books Council. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s8-DAVI-CRE-1927>

[Copy to Clipboard](#)

[Privacy & Cookies](#)  
[Copyright](#)  
[The Project](#)  
[Help](#)  
[Contact](#)



LLYFRGEL  
THE NATION



Nodiwr gan  
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Sponsored by  
Welsh Government