

SEABORNE-DAVIES, DAVID RICHARD (1904-1984), lawyer and politician

Name: David Richard Seaborne-davies
Date of birth: 1904
Date of death: 1984
Gender: Male
Occupation: lawyer and politician
Area of activity: Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

He was born at Pwllheli on 26 June 1904, the son of David S. Davies, a sea captain and Claudia Davies his wife. He was educated at Pwllheli Grammar School, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he graduated with first class honours in law in 1924, a feat he was later to repeat at St John's College, Cambridge, where he headed the list in the law tripos and was awarded the coveted Yorke Prize in 1928. At Aberystwyth he served as president of the Students' Council. He was then called to the bar, but subsequently earned his living as a lecturer, and subsequently reader in law at the University of London from 1929 until 1945. During the war years, he served in the Nationality Division at the Home Office, and was secretary to the Naturalisation Revocation Committee in 1944-45.

In May 1945, following the elevation of the sitting Liberal MP [David Lloyd George](#) to a hereditary peerage the previous January, he held the Caernarfon Boroughs for the Liberals in a by-election, polling 27,754 votes against his sole opponent [Professor J. E. Daniel](#) for Plaid Cymru. The operation of the political truce for the duration of the war meant that neither the Conservatives nor the Labour Party chose to put up a candidate. But Seaborne-Davies lost the seat in the general election in the following July by the narrowest of margins to [D. A. Price-White](#), the Tory contender. He thus had one of the shortest tenures as a Member of Parliament during the twentieth century. During these keenly observed parliamentary election campaigns he consistently pressed for the appointment of a national Secretary of State for Wales and for the setting up of a Welsh Advisory Council as a means of tackling the manifold problems facing the principality.

Subsequently Seaborne-Davies was Professor of Common Law at the University of Liverpool from 1946 until 1971. At Liverpool, he served as Dean of the Law Faculty, 1946-56, was appointed warden of the celebrated Derby Hall in 1947, continuing there until 1971, and Pro-Chancellor from 1956 until 1960. The Faculty of Law building at Liverpool was largely built at his instigation and was a firm reflection of his belief that the student body there were deserving of only the best. He also served as chairman of the Liverpool Licensing Planning Committee from 1960 until 1963. After his retirement he continued to attend a large number of university functions with vigour and interest.

He published a large number of highly regarded articles in various professional law journals, most notably on the history of patents. Many of these appeared in the *Law Quarterly Review*, the *Modern Law Review* and *Nineteenth Century*. After retirement in 1971, Davies moved to Caernarfon where he cultivated his interest in Rugby union (he had been Life President of Liverpool University Rugby Football Club and Vice President of London Welsh RFC, and became President of Pwllheli Sports Club for ten years. He served as a Magistrate in both Liverpool and Caernarfon, and was High Sheriff of Caernarvonshire in 1967-68.

Davies was a great after-dinner speaker, regaling his eager audience with a large fund of Welsh anecdotes, ranging from the academic to the athletic, suitable for any audience. But behind all this was a totally serious commitment. He also delivered many lectures all over the world and in 1967 delivered the BBC Wales annual lecture on 'Welsh makers of English law'. Throughout his life his gifts drew him to public life, administration, teaching and student welfare.

He held a large number of public appointments, including serving as president of the National Eisteddfod Council in 1958, 1973 and 1977. He had homes at Y Garn, Pwllheli and at 8 Gayton Crescent, Hampstead, London. He died 21 October 1984.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Who was who?

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The Times, 5 November 1984

Daily Post, 23 October 1984

Further Reading

NLW Archives: Caernarvon Boroughs General Election. Polling day, Thursday, July 5th, 1945

Wikipedia Article: Seaborne Davies

Additional Links

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