

Archive sources

Dr J. Graham Jones describes the papers of Lord Davies of Llandinam held at the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales

Lord Davies of Llandinam Papers

A VERY LARGE ARCHIVE of the papers of Lord Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944) was deposited at the National Library of Wales in 1970 and 1992, and a small group of further papers was added to the collection in July 2012. The cataloguing of the papers has been woefully intermittent, extending over several decades and undertaken by several different archivists, but the task was finally completed in 2017. This is the largest personal archive in the custody of the National Library and is now housed in 180 large archival boxes and a further 47 small boxes (a total of 5.643 cubic metres of archives).

Biography

David Davies (1880–1944), Lord Davies from 1932, was an industrialist, eminent philanthropist and Liberal politician, and grandson and heir of his namesake David Davies, Llandinam (1818–90) (popularly known as ‘Top Sawyer’ in Wales). He represented Montgomeryshire as Liberal member of parliament between 1906 and 1929, and after seeing active service on the Western Front during the First World War he was appointed parliamentary private secretary to David Lloyd George in June 1916. He was close to Lloyd George during this period, but the relationship soon soured after Lloyd George became prime minister, and in 1917 he was ignominiously dismissed from his government post by an outraged Lloyd George. He never held governmental office again. He was returned unopposed in Montgomeryshire in both general elections in 1910 and again in 1918, 1922 and 1923, and the local Liberal association went into moribund decay while Davies busied himself with his industrial and philanthropic interests.

Following his experiences in the war, Davies became a fervent campaigner for international order to prevent war, leading to his establishment of the New Commonwealth Society, his personal brainchild, in 1932. The society was active in a number of countries,

formulating and promoting ideas for an international authority, police and air force to keep the peace until the late 1940s. Davies was also a leading figure in the fight against tuberculosis in Wales as an officer and funder of the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association in 1910, and through endowing a Chair in Tuberculosis at the Welsh National School of Medicine at Cardiff. His two spinster sisters, Gwendoline Elizabeth and Mary Sidney, donated Gregynog Hall near Newtown to the University of Wales and a magnificent art collection to the National Museum at Cardiff.

Lord Davies awaits his modern biographer. A few years after his death, c. 1953, a typescript biography was prepared in all probability by Sir Charles Tennyson (now designated E2/1/21 within this collection). This has been digitised by the Library and may be viewed via the NLW web pages at <https://viewer.library.wales/4683286#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-1099%2C-297%2C5720%2C5933>.

Description of collection

The papers of David Davies, the first Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944), along with papers of other members of the Davies family, his grandfather David Davies (1818–1890); his father Edward Davies (1852–1898); Revd. Gwilym Davies (1879–1955); Lord Davies’s two younger sisters Gwendoline Elizabeth Davies (1882–1951) and Mary Sidney Davies (1884–1963). The papers reflect Lord Davies varied business and political interests and include a very large corpus of the records of the New Commonwealth Society, papers relating to the League of Nations Union Welsh National Council, the first and second world wars, the Temple of Peace at Cardiff, the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Institute, the National Library of Wales, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Davies’s coal and railway interests,

international affairs, drafts and copies of Davies’s publications mainly on international relations, papers of the David Davies Memorial Institute, and papers relating to the Gregynog Press.

The collection has been divided into thirteen sub-sections while cataloguing.

Class A: David Davies: General and Political Correspondence, 1901–50 (13 boxes)

Comprises letters to David Davies, from 1932 the first Baron Davies of Llandinam, 1901–44, mainly on domestic political matters and international issues. Some of the early letters are from David Davies while he travelled extensively abroad, 1901–5. From 1932 onwards some concern the affairs and the running of the New Commonwealth Society set up by Davies himself in that year, mainly the proceedings of its British Section, and these overlap the papers listed in Class B. Some letters also relate to Davies’s researches and many publications in the form of monographs and journal articles. There are also references to the role and activities of the League of Nations Union and to the publication of the influential Welsh periodical the *Welsh Outlook*. There are also significant files of copies of letters sent out by Davies’s various secretaries on a wide range of subjects. The group also comprises correspondence and papers, 1916–43, relating mainly to the Montgomeryshire County Liberal Association and political life within the county, including the circumstances leading to David Davies’s decision to retire from parliament in 1926–27. There are, too, some interesting memoranda, 1918–44, deriving from the Liberal Party nationally during a crucial period in its history. There is also correspondence and papers, 1945–50, concerning E. H. Garner-Evans MP.

Class B: Peace Movements and International Affairs, 1917–56 (106 boxes)

Records relating to various peace movements. They include correspondence and papers, 1920–34, relating to the

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establishment of the League of Nations Union (Wales) and its development up to 1934; various memoranda and policy documents, the minutes of various committees and sub-committees, papers concerning the organisation of conferences and meetings, monthly reports, and lists of local branches, their officials and their activities; correspondence, printed material (including some press cuttings), 1935–44, relating to the work and activities of the League of Nations Union (Wales), especially its council; correspondence and papers, 1917–49, concerning the New Europe Society, League of Free Nations, and the League of Nations Union; various papers, 1937–54, relating to the League of Nations Union and similar bodies and organisations, including the agenda and minutes of its Welsh National Council, and various committees and sub-committees, memoranda and reports, circulars and circular correspondence, and newsletters; documents, 1922–39, concerning the background to the establishment of the New Commonwealth Society, its administrative records, 1932–56, related papers and memoranda, 1929–56, extensive files of correspondence concerning its administration, activities, especially its expansion abroad, 1932–54; documents relating to early atomic energy initiatives, 1945–48; correspondence and papers, 1942–51, relating to the various campaigns to secure federalist solutions and a system of world government, together with some New Commonwealth publications.

Class C: The World Wars, 1914–44 (6 boxes)

Correspondence and papers relating to various aspects of the First World War and the Second World War. Most of the papers here relate to the First World War, but there is some material related to the Second World War as well. Despite being an ardent advocate for peace, Lord Davies did all he could to support the war effort from 1939 – there are files related to the use of Plas Dinam as a war hospital, the supply of water for industry, support for Finland (in the early stages of the war when Finland was fighting the Soviet Union) and proposals drawn up by Lord Davies to bomb the Romanian oil fields.

Class D: Welsh Affairs, 1905–51 (25 boxes)

Correspondence and papers, 1905–51, relating to many aspects of Welsh life

and Welsh institutions with which Lord Davies was actively involved. These include the Presbyterian Church in Wales, the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (especially the Wilson chair of International Politics at the college established in 1919), the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, the National Library of Wales, and the Temple of Peace at Cathays Park, Cardiff. In the ‘Welsh Affairs’ group of papers there are also many boxes of material related to the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association, which Lord Davies and his sisters founded in 1910 to treat and research TB.

Class E: Davies Family of Llandinam: Family and Personal Papers, 1788–1954 (15 boxes)

Documents, 1859–1910, mainly relating to David Davies, Llandinam (1818–90), commonly known as ‘Top Sawyer’, his son Edward Davies, Llandinam (1852–98); Margaret (1884–1963) and Gwendoline Davies (1882–1951); and source materials, 1863–1935, collected for the preparation of a biography of David Davies (1818–90), a draft biography prepared, c. 1900–10, by Goronwy Jones; and correspondence and papers relating to the preparation and publication of the biography by Ivor Thomas in 1937; files of papers, 1906–53, relating to David Davies, Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944), and his immediate family; and correspondence and papers, 1922–37, concerning the administration of Merchiston Castle School, near Edinburgh; and correspondence and papers, 1944–54, concerning the Davies family of Llandinam, much of it relating to Edward Davies, son of Lord and Lady Davies; miscellaneous business, financial and legal papers concerning the Davies family of Llandinam, 1934–54, some relating to the Berthddu estate, near Wrexham, and the Coulin estate in Scotland; and miscellaneous Davies family records.

Class F: Business, Finance and Industry, 1904–59 (12 boxes)

Correspondence, papers and financial and promotional material, 1904–59, relating to the wide range of business and industrial interests with which Lord Davies or the Davies family were associated. These include the Gregynog Estates, the Ocean Coal Company, various property and commercial interests, and Canadian ranches and business interests.

Class G: David Davies’s Publications, Articles and Speeches, 1928–45 (18 boxes)

Comprises papers concerning Lord Davies’s writings – monographs, articles and essays, press columns and letters to the press, and to his speeches.

Class H: Lord Davies: Subject Files, 1918–46 (6 boxes)

Subject files, 1918–46, reflecting Lord Davies’s interests and commitments, mainly international movements and affairs and foreign travels. Among the institutions represented are the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Voluntary International Air Force, the International Refugee Organisation, the United Nations: General Assembly, the United Nations Organisation, the World Movement for World Federal Government, the Atomic Energy Committee, the European Movement and the Council of Europe, and the British Atlantic Committee.

Class I: David Davies: Notebooks and Pocket Books, 1892–1944 (4 boxes)

Notebooks and miscellaneous volumes kept by David Davies while at Merchiston School, near Edinburgh and at Trinity College, Cambridge University, and during World War One, notebooks containing notes made by David Davies in preparation for various speeches and writings, and miscellaneous, stray volumes.

Class J: Rev. Gwilym Davies Papers, 1915–52 (4 boxes)

Papers relating to the Revd. Gwilym Davies (1879–1955), Baptist minister, promoter of international understanding, and the founder of the annual Goodwill Message from the Youth of Wales. They include correspondence, sermon and lecture notes, documentation relating to the League of Nations, the League of Nations Union and various other peace initiatives, the Welsh Book Festival, radio broadcasting in Wales, a pocket diary for the year 1934, printed material and press cuttings, and a substantial corpus of papers concerning the Annual Goodwill Message, 1922–56.

Class K: David Davies Memorial Institute, 1947–60 (2 boxes)

This class includes correspondence, 1947–54, and correspondence and financial papers, 1958–60. The papers relate to membership of the Institute and the

payment of subscriptions, the publication and despatch of its journal *International Relations*, and the publication and sale of books.

Class L: Printed Material, 1917–57 (17 boxes)

Comprises printed materials and press cuttings. The printed materials include a wide range of leaflets, pamphlets etc., 1917–57, many of these concerning the activities of peace movements and peace initiatives, including some of the publications of the New Commonwealth Society. Some of the material reflects various aspects of Welsh life. The press cuttings, 1918–51, comprise newspaper articles, mostly regarding international affairs, the build up to the Second World War, policies of the New Commonwealth Society, post-war international issues, the United Nations, the Cold War and the Marshall Plan.

Class M: Gregynog Press, 1929–62 (1 box)

Printed material from the Gregynog Press for events held at Gregynog including the Gregynog Festival, conferences and religious services. The material relating to the Gregynog Festival (M1) is arranged into three files: festival

programmes, concert programmes and orders of service. M2 comprises files containing Orders of Services for religious services held at Gregynog as part of various conferences and meetings.

The Lord Davies Papers are not subject to any restriction of access.

Reading matter on Lord Davies

The fullest biographical account hitherto available in print is J. Graham Jones, 'The Peacemaker: David Davies, Lord Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944)', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, vol. 101 (2013), pp. 117–148. A briefer overview of his life and career is also available in J. Graham Jones, 'The Peacemaker: David Davies, the first Baron Davies of Llandinam (1880–1944)', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, no. 29 (Winter 2000/2001), pp. 16–23. An excellent summary may also be found in Lord Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Davies, David, first Baron Davies (1880–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* on-line version (accessed 17 November 2018). Still useful, though now somewhat dated, is Peter Lewis, *David Davies (Top-sawyer) 1818–1890 and his Grandson David Davies (1st Baron Davies) 1880–1944: A*

Biographical Sketch (Llanidloes, 2007 reprint).

My friend and former colleague Mr Rob Phillips, who is now responsible for the running of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, delivered a very fine lecture at the NLW on 6 June 2018 entitled 'Lord David Davies: the Peacemonger' which provided a quite splendid overview of the Davies archive at the NLW. Mr Phillips has very kindly placed the text of his keynote lecture at my disposal and I am most indebted to it for several most valuable points of detail.

Contact details

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Letters to the Editor

Liberals in local government

Mark Smulian's letter on the origins of *Focus* newsletters (*Journal of Liberal History* 99, Summer 2018) triggered my own memories of Southend. He suggests that Prittlewell ward Liberals there had circulated a local newsletter as early as 1962 and speculates that Prittlewell's David Evans, later on a well-known figure in the party, may have played some part in spreading the idea.

I joined the Liberal Party in early 1958, amidst a run of encouraging by-election votes (including Mark Bonham Carter's victory in Torrington). But between Summer 1958 and the October 1959 general election, the party fought only one in England (Scottish ones were too far away), in Southend West on a smog-blanketed day at the end of January 1959.

Having just left school, I was able to travel to what was my first experience both of an election campaign and of meeting Liberals outside my own local patch. On polling day, I was stationed in Prittlewell, learning what to do from a young Councillor David Evans. I was the more attentive as Southend was one of few boroughs where Liberals had recently gained representation on the council, and one of the largest of those few. How did they do it?

I came away, immensely impressed with the successful Prittlewell election machine, though I do not now recall a regular newsletter as part of it. But I suspect that I was among many English Liberals who came to Southend in 1959, taking home campaigning ideas to put into practice at home.

Michael Steed

Liberal Party Council

I don't wish to prolong the correspondence (see Letters, *Journal of Liberal History* 99 (Summer 2018) and 100 (Autumn 2018)) but I must assure John Smithson that my reference to the 'chaotic' Liberal Party council had nothing to do with his contributions. I agree we often disagreed but I still respected his contributions.

No, what I had in mind was watching on TV the sight of Baroness Seear and other luminaries weaving their way past empty beer barrels to get into some student union which had been chosen for the Saturday meeting, and another occasion when I was present and a member of the council decided to do a dance on the floor – it was difficult to take the body seriously.

David Steel