

BALLINGER, Sir JOHN (1860 - 1933), first librarian of the National Library of Wales

Name: John Ballinger
Date of birth: 1860
Date of death: 1933
Spouse: Amy Ballinger (née Boughton)
Parent: Henry Ballinger
Gender: Male
Occupation: first librarian of the National Library of Wales
Area of activity: History and Culture; Literature and Writing; Scholarship and Languages
Author: William Llewelyn Davies

Born at Pontnewynydd, Monmouth, 12 May 1860, the son of Henry Ballinger; died at Hawarden, Flintshire, 8 January 1933. He was educated at a school in Canton, Cardiff, and became at 15 an assistant in the Cardiff Public Library, remaining there five years until he became librarian of Doncaster; he returned in 1884 to become chief librarian of Cardiff and to succeed in making it one of the best public libraries in England and Wales. In 1908 he was appointed first librarian of the National Library of Wales, which was to be opened at Aberystwyth the first day of January 1909.

Ballinger made a name for himself both as librarian and bibliographer. Although he was not a Welsh -speaking Welshman, he must be credited with the formation of a good Welsh library in Cardiff. He was fortunate to have the assistance and advice there of such people as [James Ifano Jones](#) and [Professor Thomas Powel](#). With the help of [Ifano](#) he arranged for publication in 1898 a catalogue of the Welsh and Celtic portions of the contents of the Cardiff Public Library; evidence of [Ifano's](#) assistance is also seen in what Ballinger published on [Vicar Prichard](#) of Llandoverly (1899), the Trevecka printing press (1905), and *The Bible in Wales* (1906).

In view of the great success achieved at Cardiff in building up the Welsh collection - yet not at the expense of starving the other part of that city's library - it is not surprising that the new library at Aberystwyth flourished so greatly under his care.

Ballinger's contemporaries in the world of libraries in Britain thought highly of him as librarian and administrator; he was, for example, chosen as the president of the Library Association in 1922. He served for a time as chairman of the Press Board of the University of Wales; that body arranged for him to prepare new editions of *Rhann o Psalmae Dafydd Brophwyd ...* 1603, *Basilikon Doron ...* 1604, *Y Llyfr Plygain ...* 1612, *Yr Ymarfer o Dduwioledeb ...* 1630, and *Carwr y Cymru ...* 1631. He prepared the introduction for a new edition (1927) of [Sir John Wynne's](#) *The history of the Gwydir family*^[?]; he published *Gleanings from a Printer's File* in 1928, and 'Katheryn of Berain' in *Cymm.*, xl. He served as editor of the *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society* for some years. He was awarded the honorary degree of M.A. by the University of Wales, in 1909, became a C.B.E. in 1920, and was made a knight bachelor in 1930, in which year he retired. In 1932 he was awarded the medal of the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion for his services to Wales in the realms of librarianship and bibliography. He had married, in 1888, Amy, daughter of Captain D. Boughton, Cardiff; they had three sons and one daughter.

Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

Sources

Who's who?, 1932

The Library Association Record, February 1933

W. Ll. Davies, *National Library of Wales, A Survey of its History, its Contents, and its Activities* (Aberystwyth 1937)

The National Library of Wales Journal, i, 22-5

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personal knowledge

M. A. Bloomfield, *Sir John Ballinger: an annotated bibliography* (1998)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Ballinger](#)

Additional Links

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