

## DAVIES, DAVID VAUGHAN (1911 - 1969), anatomist

**Name:** David Vaughan Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1911  
**Date of death:** 1969  
**Spouse:** Ruby Davies (née Ernest)  
**Child:** Michael David Vaughan Davies  
**Child:** Elizabeth Louise Vaughan Davies  
**Child:** Christopher Henry Vaughan Davies  
**Parent:** Joshua Davies  
**Parent:** Mary Davies (née Ryder)  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** anatomist  
**Author:** Dafydd Johnston

David Vaughan Davies was born on 28 October 1911 at Dolfonddu, Cemais, Montgomeryshire, the younger son of Joshua Davies (1873-1964), farmer, and his wife Mary (née Ryder, 1876-1950). In 1924 he went to Towyn County School, and in 1931 he went on to University College, London as an exhibitioner and then to University College Hospital Medical School having been awarded a Ferriere Scholarship. It was during this time that he came under the tutelage of the Professor of Clinical Anatomy, another Welshman, Henry Albert Harris (1886-1968) who had a profound influence on his life.

He graduated MB, BS and MRCS, LRCP in 1935 and spent a year as temporary medical officer in the RAF, subsequently becoming a demonstrator in the Anatomy Department at Cambridge (1936) where Harris had been made professor, and he was appointed a lecturer there in 1939. Under Harris's guidance he began a series of studies of the skeletal system, especially the joints, which he continued all his life. He was also an active research worker in comparative anatomy, embryology and the anatomy of the reproductive system. He was known as a lucid teacher but a formidable oral examiner, kind and helpful to struggling students, firm and sharp with fools and laggards.

Harris brought with him from London to Cambridge his secretary, Ruby Ernest (1911-2000), and she and Davies were married in 1940. They had three children, Michael David Vaughan Davies (b. 1944), Elizabeth Louise Vaughan Davies (b. 1948) and Christopher Henry Vaughan Davies (b. 1948).

In 1944 Davies was elected a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, and in 1948 he was appointed to the chair of anatomy at St Thomas's Hospital Medical School, a post he held until his death. He quickly set about putting the department in good working order and for the first year or so gave all the lectures and demonstrations himself, as well as overseeing the dissecting room. He recruited excellent teaching staff and the department became one of the best in London.

In 1960 the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council established an electron-microscopy unit at St Thomas's with Davies as the first Director. His chief interest throughout his research career was the anatomy and physiology of synovial joints, and in 1961 he was co-author of *Synovial Joints, Their Structure and Mechanics*. He also wrote extensively on arthrology and contributed to *The Textbook of Rheumatic Diseases*. His name became known throughout the world as a result of his editorship of *Gray's Anatomy*, as joint editor with T. B. Johnston and F. Davies of the 32nd centenary edition in 1958 and of the 33rd edition with F. Davies in 1962. He was sole editor of the 34th edition which was printed 1967 - 1972. From 1958 to 1966 he was Sub-dean of the medical school, and from 1960 to 1964 he took on the editorship of the *Journal of Anatomy* ably assisted by the secretarial and translating skills of his wife.

His administrative ability was evident in his involvement with many boards and committees, including the Board of Governors of St Thomas's Hospital, the Academic Council of London University, the Council of the Heberden Society and the Research and Animal Husbandry Committees of the Zoological Society of London. For many years he was a member of the Council of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and its President in 1966 and 1967.

A Welsh speaker, he gave his active support to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and the London Welsh Association and was President of the Montgomeryshire Society in 1964. In 1961 he was High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire.

He travelled widely as an examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons to the Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia and the West Indies as well as in the UK. Appointed DSc (London) in 1961 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons by election in 1963. In 1966 he spent six months as a visiting professor at Auckland University.

He died on 16 July 1969 in the Hospital for Nervous Diseases in Maida Vale from a subarachnoid haemorrhage, and his funeral took place at St Mary's Church, Twickenham where he had lived for twenty-one years. A memorial service was held in the Methodist chapel at Cemais where his parents are buried.

## Author

Dafydd Johnston

## Sources

Obituaries in the

*British Medical Journal*, 3 (1969), 243-4

*Journal of anatomy*, Nov 1969, 105 (Pt 3), pp.591-594

*The Times*, 19 July 1969

*The Eagle* (St John's College Cambridge Magazine)

*St. Thomas's Hospital gazette*

Personal information from Christopher Vaughan Davies

## Images

'[In memoriam. David Vaughan Davies, M.A., D.Sc., M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.](#),' *Journal of anatomy*, Nov 1969, 105 (Pt 3), p.592

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