

## DAVIES, DAVID ARTHUR (1913 - 1990), meteorologist

**Name:** David Arthur Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1913  
**Date of death:** 1990  
**Spouse:** Mary Davies (née Shapland)  
**Child:** Michael Davies  
**Child:** Rosalind Davies  
**Child:** Margaret Davies  
**Parent:** Garfield Brynmor Davies  
**Parent:** Mary Jane Davies (née Michael)  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** meteorologist  
**Area of activity:** Science and Mathematics  
**Author:** Lyn Owen

Arthur Davies was born on 11 November 1913 in Barry, Glamorganshire, the second child of Garfield Brynmor Davies, a schoolteacher, and his wife Mary Jane (née Michael, 1881-1974). He had one brother, William Brynmor Davies (1911-1970). He was educated at Gladstone Road Elementary School and Barry County School, and went on to the University of Wales, Cardiff, where he graduated with first class honours in both mathematics and physics in 1936. He married fellow student Mary Shapland (1912-1992) in 1938, and they had one son, Michael (b. 1939), and two daughters, Rosalind (1945-2016) and Margaret (b. 1952).

Davies pursued an interest in meteorology, and from 1936 to 1939 he was employed as a technical officer by the Meteorological Office of the Air Ministry. From 1939 to 1947 he served in the RAF where he became Senior Meteorological Officer for the British Expeditionary Force. He helped co-ordinate RAF flights across the North Atlantic and directed the meteorological services which enabled aircraft to reach the vital Yalta conference in 1945.

In 1947 he returned to the Meteorological Service as Principal Scientific Officer. From 1949 to 1955 he worked in East Africa, gaining a wide reputation for his research which identified relationships between climate patterns and the development of human societies. In 1955 he was elected by delegates of the World Meteorology Organisation (WMO) to the post of Secretary-General, which he took up in 1956 and held until 1979, serving six consecutive terms. In this role he achieved a high level of international collaboration on climate issues and ensured that the WMO worked with other UN agencies. He regarded meteorology as an aspect of the study of human impact on the natural environment. He was responsible for inaugurating the World Weather Watch Programme in 1963, and the Global Atmospheric Research Programme (1967-82).

On his retirement in 1979 his work was recognised by a United Nations Peace Medal, and in 1980 he was awarded a knighthood. He received many other medals and honours from meteorological institutes and universities across the world, including the United States, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland and the Czech Republic. In his retirement he edited a history of the WMO, *Forty Years of Progress and Achievement* (1990) and was active in the Welsh Centre for International Affairs.

Arthur Davies died on 13 November 1990 in Brighton. He has been remembered in the town of birth with a blue plaque in Gladstone Road, Barry.

### Author

Lyn Owen

### Sources

Daniel Gorman, '[Davies, David Arthur](#)', Io-BIO, Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries General of International Organisations

O. M. Ashford, '[Meteorologist's profile — David Arthur Davies](#)', *Weather*, vol. 54, issue 8 (1999), 253-57

[Sixwells](#) (genealogical site which includes 'World Weather Watch', unpublished memoir by Davies)

### Additional Links

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