

DAVIES, WINDSOR (1930 - 2019), actor

Name: Windsor Davies
Date of birth: 1930
Date of death: 2019
Spouse: Eluned Davies (née Evans)
Child: Jane Davies
Child: Sarah Davies
Child: Nancy Davies
Child: Danny Davies
Child: Bethan Davies
Parent: Davies
Parent: Maggie Davies (née Jones)
Gender: Male
Occupation: actor
Area of activity: Performing Arts
Author: Robert Hyde

Windsor Davies was born on 28 August 1930 in Canning Town in the East End of London, the son of Anyan Davies and his wife Maggie (née Jones). He had one sister, Glenys. Both his parents were Welsh speakers. In 1940, shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, the family moved back to Anyan Davies's home village of Nant-y-Moel in Ogmore Vale. Windsor attended Ogmore Grammar School, and afterwards worked in a factory, subsequently moving to a local mine to train and begin work as an electrical fitter and engineer. He was called up for National Service between 1950 and 1952, serving in Libya and Egypt with the East Surrey Regiment. It was in the army that he found he was naturally a great mimic, impersonating the officers. Davies was noted for having quite a loud personality, and a great sense of fun, which never left him.

Returning from National Service, Davies enrolled at Bangor Teacher Training College, qualifying as a teacher. He taught Maths and English at Mountside School in Leek, Staffordshire, and subsequently at a school in Elephant and Castle in London. He became involved with amateur dramatics in his spare time throughout the 1950s. He married Eluned (Lyn) Evans in 1957, and they had four daughters, Jane, Sarah, Nancy and Beth, and one son, Danny. It was Lyn who suggested to him in 1959 that he should try acting as a career. In 1960 he took a course at Richmond College, and gained experience with the Kew Theatre Company. Almost immediately after this, he found work with the Cheltenham Rep, and turned professional as an actor from 1961. He was very rarely out of work until he retired.

Davies's first major role was in the ATV series *Probation Officer* as Bill Morgan, with the cast including Sir John Hurt, Honor Blackman, Glyn Houston and Judy Geeson. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s he appeared in many smaller roles on television, in such series as *Moulded in Earth*, *Orlando*, *Coronation Street*, *The Newcomers*, *Conqueror's Road*, *Smith*, *The Onedin Line*, *Canterbury Tales*, *Dixon of Dock Green*, *Z Cars* and *General Hospital*. Davies's natural bearing led to him being cast as police officers, army sergeants, petty officers or Welshmen.

One notable appearance came in 1967, when Davies appeared in the role of Toby in *Doctor Who*, playing opposite Patrick Troughton's Doctor - a role which is unfortunately lost to the archive, apart from a few photographs.

In 1974, Davies got the role which made him a huge household name - that of Battery Sergeant Major Tudor Bryn 'Shut Up' Williams in the sitcom *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*. Ironically, Davies was not the first choice for the role, which was originally offered to Leonard Rossiter, who turned it down. The show's creator, David Croft, had remembered his portrayal of a Sergeant in *Badge of Fear* and Spike Milligan's *Adolf Hitler - My Part In His Downfall*, and asked him to come in to audition for the cast - for which they specifically wrote a page of dialogue for him. Croft said it was a 'perfect performance' so quickly. Spike Milligan was reported to have said that Davies gave the funniest performance of a sergeant major he ever saw.

The show was hugely popular, with viewing figures regularly over 17 million. It led to Davies and Don 'Lofty' Estelle recording a comic version of the song 'Whispering Grass', which gave them a Number 1 hit in 1975, which is still the sixth highest-selling UK duet of all time.

In 1978, Davies also made a cult Welsh film, *Grand Slam*, which firmly embedded him into the psyche of 1970s Wales. The film showed the exploits of the committee and members of an imaginary rugby club (Aberflyarff) on a trip to France to watch Wales play and eventually lose the final rugby international of the season. It was an embodiment of rugby tourism and Davies's character Mog Jones is fondly remembered for bellowing "WALES! WALES! WALES!" from behind prison bars, cementing his position as a Welsh favourite. Davies himself was a huge rugby fan, and this was his favourite role.

When *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* came to an end in 1981, Davies was cast in another sitcom, *Never The Twain* with Sir Donald Sinden, which was immediately another hit series, running for ten years. It is also notable that in the 1970s, Davies inadvertently replaced the position occupied by Sid James in the *Carry On* series of films, with roles in *Carry on Behind*, and *Carry on England*. For children of a certain generation, Davies was the voice of Sergeant Major Zero in Gerry Anderson's *Terrahawks*, a children's prime-time animated show. He also made many personal appearances on game shows and on other comedians' shows, some of which were not without controversy.

From the mid-1980s onwards, Davies played more serious acting roles, such as George Vance in *The New Statesman*, David Lloyd George in *Mosely*, General Tufto in *Vanity Fair*, and Rottcodd in *Gormenghast*. In 1988, he joined an all-star Welsh cast to record *Under Milk Wood*. The cast was led by Sir Anthony Hopkins, and included Sir Geraint Evans, Dame Sian Phillips, Sir Harry Secombe and Philip Madoc. Davies played 1st drowned, PC Atila Rees and the Fisherman.

Davies is remembered for his distinctive round-toned purring Welsh voice, which he never hid, and used to great effect in recording many radio shows, audiobooks and voiceovers for advertising. He recorded the classic *Treasure Island* for Ladybird Books, and famously was the voice advertising Cadbury's Wispa chocolate bars for many years in the 1980s.

He retired from acting in 2005, and he and Lyn lived just outside Toulouse in the South of France. Lyn died in 2018, and Windsor a few months later on 17 January 2019, aged 88.

His role in *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* led to several catch phrases, and he now has an internet meme - a dryly delivered 'Oh Dear. How Sad. Never Mind'.

Author

Robert Hyde

Sources

BFI Filmography: [Windsor Davies](#)

BFI Profile: [Davies, Windsor \(1930-\)](#)

BBC Wales Arts Profile: [Windsor Davies](#)

This Is Your Life: [Big Red Book: Windsor DAVIES \(1930-2019\)](#)

Meic Stephens, [Windsor Davies obituary](#), *The Guardian*, 20 January 2019

Wales Online: Why Windsor Davies is one of our greatest living Welshmen (even if he's really English)

IMDB: Windsor Davies (1930-2019)

Comedy Heroes Biography: Lovely Boy: Life & Career of Windsor Davies

BBC: Windsor Davies: It Ain't Half Hot Mum actor dies aged 88

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: Windsor Davies

Additional Links

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