

## PHILLIPS, DAVID RHYS (1862 - 1952), librarian

**Name:** David Rhys Phillips  
**Date of birth:** 1862  
**Date of death:** 1952  
**Spouse:** Anne Phillips (née Watts)  
**Spouse:** Mary Phillips (née Hancock)  
**Parent:** Gwenllian Phillips (née Rees)  
**Parent:** David Phillips  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** librarian  
**Area of activity:** History and Culture; Literature and Writing  
**Author:** Brynley Francis Roberts

Born 20 March 1862 at Beili Glas, Pontwalby, Glynneath, Glamorganshire, his grandfather's farm, the son of David and Gwenllian (née Rees) Phillips, but he was brought up at Melincourt, Resolven, in the Neath valley. He was educated at the National School, Resolven and at private schools - Burrows School, Arnold College - in Swansea. After a period as a miner he became a compositor and proof-reader at Walter Whittingdon's printing office in Neath in 1893 and also acted as an auxiliary postman, but in 1900 he was appointed a reader at Oxford University Press. He was editor of the *Welsh Bible* in 1908 but more important, he followed courses in librarianship at Oxford Technical College. He returned to Swansea as Welsh Assistant in the Borough Library in 1905, having gained his Library Association diploma, and was responsible for cataloguing the Welsh section (including the collection of [Robert Jones](#), Rotherhithe,). He was elected F.L.A. in 1913 and F.S.A. (Scotland) in 1920-21. He was promoted Borough Welsh and Celtic librarian and subsequently in 1923 joint-librarian with W.J. Salter until his retirement in 1939.

D. Rhys Phillips was nurtured in the literary and cultural societies of Resolven and Neath and he was inspired to research local history, to write entertaining articles to the Welsh press and to compete at *eisteddfodau*. He wrote a number of substantial essays on musical and biographical subjects at National Eisteddfodau in 1931, 1932, 1936, 1938, 1948, 1949 and he was active in many Welsh societies, including the Welsh Folksong Soc., National Eisteddfod Council, the Gorsedd Board; he was a keen Celtophile and was one of the supporters of the Celtic Congress in 1917, secretary until 1925 and a prime mover in establishing the Cornish Gorsedd in 1928. He published several articles on the development of the public library service but his main interest was in library and printing history. He was one of the founders of the Welsh Bibliographical Soc. in 1906, secretary from 1907 to 1951. There can be little doubt that his zeal and enthusiasm sustained the society and its journal. His own publications include: *Select bibliography of Owain Glyndwr* (1915), *The romantic history of the monastic libraries of Wales* (1912), *Dr Griffith Roberts, Canon of Milan* (1917), *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion* (1921), *The Celtic countries, their literary and library activities* (1915). It is very easy to draw attention to the faults in Rhys Phillips' work but he has an honourable place as one of the pioneers of modern Welsh bibliographical studies.

In 1918 he won a £100 prize at the Neath national eisteddfod for an essay on the history of the Neath valley. This was published in 1925 as *A history of the Vale of Neath*, the fruits of many years research and collecting documents and traditions of all kinds relating to the life of the community, a facsimile reprint appeared in 1994.

He married twice, (1) Mary Hancock, who died April 1926, and (2) Anne Watts, 'Pencerddes Tawe', December 1927. The son of the first marriage died in 1924, and there was a daughter of the second marriage. Rhys Phillips died at his home Beili Glas, 15 Chaddesley Terrace, Swansea, 22 March 1952.

### Author

Dr Brynley Francis Roberts

### Sources

NLW Archives: [D. Rhys Phillips Papers](#)

D. Rhys Phillips papers at Swansea City Library

*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1952), 119-21, 122-24

*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, 12 (1983-84), 43-50

*Who's who in Wales*, (1937)

*The Library Association Record*, 54 (1952), 189

Tom Davies, in Hywel Teifi Edwards, ed., *Nedd a Dulais* (Llandysul 1994), pp.218-38

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