

## DAVIES, JOHN (1781-1848), of Fronheulog, Llandderfel, Meironnydd, one of the most prominent lay leaders of Calvinistic Methodism in his day,

**Name:** John Davies  
**Date of birth:** 1781  
**Date of death:** 1848  
**Spouse:** Jonnet Davies (née Jones)  
**Parent:** Gabriel Davies  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** one of the most prominent lay leaders of Calvinistic Methodism in his day  
**Home:** Fronheulog  
**Area of activity:** Religion  
**Author:** Robert Thomas Jenkins

He was the eldest of the six children of

### GABRIEL DAVIES (1757 - 1828)

A native of Clocaenog, Denbighshire, came to Bala c. 1775-80, at first as a saddler, and afterwards became a grocer and draper, but finally developed into a wholesale hosier on a large scale; Bala was then a notable entrepôt for the stockings knit in a wide region around, and Davies exported these from Barmouth, trading even with America; he amassed a considerable fortune. Withal, he was a leading Calvinistic Methodist elder, and a warm supporter of Thomas Charles's activities. After Charles's death, he sided (1816-7) with Thomas Jones (1756 - 1820) and John Hughes (1796 - 1860) in their attempts to stem the then rising tide of hyper-Calvinism in the C.M. connexion. He had married (5 January 1781) Ann Jones of Cae-gwyn, Rhydydan; the bridesmaid was Sally Jones, afterwards Mrs. Thomas Charles. He died 6 August 1828.

John Davies (christened 23 October 1781) succeeded to much of his father's wealth and also to his leadership in his connexion; but unlike his father he clung to the conservative theology of John Elias, and was his leading lay supporter - so much so that the irate Michael Roberts (1780 - 1849), of Pwllheli, styling Elias the 'pope' of the connexion, referred to Davies as his 'cardinal.' With Elias, he was one of the three architects of the 'Constitutional Deed' (1826) of the C.M. connexion - the third was the Glamorgan lawyer and elder, Elias Bassett, and the draughtsman was John Wilks of London, whose father, Matthew Wilks, had been one of Whitefield's exhorters and one of Thomas Charles's collaborators in the Bible Society, but whose son, also named John, is tersely described in the *D.N.B.* as 'swindler.'

John Davies married, in 1813, Jonnet, daughter of John Jones of Ty'n-ddôl, Llandderfel, and about 1815 built the mansion of Fronheulog, enclosing and developing surrounding land into an estate. In 1816 he became sheriff of Merioneth. His appointment, in 1822, to the bench of magistrates provoked a storm; both as a nonconformist and as a 'mere tradesman,' Davies was unacceptable to his fellow-justices on the Bala bench, and for some years they refused to sit with him in petty sessions, so that when Davies's turn on the rota came round, Samuel Holland had to come over from Ffestiniog to make a quorum - it seems odd to find T. J. Hogg, the friend of Shelley, upholding the behaviour of the recalcitrants.

Davies died 12 June 1848. A letter by Wordsworth praises him (along with Thomas Charles and John Elias) for his loyalty to Church and State, and also for his landscape-improvements. The papers of the Fronheulog estate are now in N.L.W.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins**, (1881 - 1969)

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