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# David Jones letters to Tom Burns

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## Gwybodaeth grynodeb | Summary information

<b>Lleoliad   Repository:</b>	Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru = The National Library of Wales
<b>Teitl   Title:</b>	David Jones letters to Tom Burns
<b>ID:</b>	NLW MS 21797E.
<b>Virtua system control number [alternative]:</b>	vtls004242249
<b>GEAC system control number [alternative]:</b>	(WIAbNL)0000242249
<b>Project identifier [alternative]:</b>	cymruww1
<b>Dyddiad   Date:</b>	1940-1971 (dyddiad creu   date of creation)
<b>Disgrifiad ffisegol   Physical description:</b>	i, 68 ff. ; c. 320 x 200 mm. Guarded and filed at NLW.
<b>Lleoliad ffisegol   Physical location:</b>	ARCH/MSS (GB0210)
<b>Dyddiadau creu, golygu a dileu   Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	
<b>Nodyn   Note [generalNote]:</b>	Title based on contents.
<b>Nodyn   Note [generalNote]:</b>	Preferred citation: NLW MS 21797E.

## Hanes gweinyddol / Braslun bywgraffyddol | Administrative history | Biographical sketch

### Nodyn | Note

David Jones (1895-1974) was an accomplished artist who produced watercolours, illustrations and inscriptions, and who also gained acclaim as a poet, especially as the author of *In Parenthesis* in 1937, and the long prose poem *The Anathemata* in 1952.

David Walter Jones was born in Brockley, Kent, on 1 November 1895. His mother, Alice Ann née Bradshaw, was from London, and his father, James Jones, was originally from Holywell, Flintshire. He attended the Camberwell School of Art from 1910-1914, and the Westminster School of Art from 1919-1921.

He joined the London Welsh Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fuseliers in 1915 and served as a private with them until 1918. This experience had a profound effect on him, and his first book, *In Parenthesis* (1937), is an epic war poem which deals with the period he spent in France.

In 1921 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church, adopting Michael as a middle name. This was a defining moment in his life and work. In the same year he met Eric Gill and joined Gill's community at Ditchling, Sussex, where he learnt wood-engraving. In 1924 he became engaged to Petra Gill and often visited the family at Capel y ffin, near Abergavenny. His engagement with Petra was broken off in 1927 and subsequently he never married.

Between 1928 and 1932 he moved around a great deal, producing watercolours and also writing. In 1933 he suffered a breakdown in health and endured repeated periods of ill-health from then onwards. He virtually stopped painting until 1937. In 1937 Faber published *In Parenthesis*, which T. S. Eliot regarded as 'a work of genius'. He was awarded the Hawthornden prize for it in 1938.

He was based at the parental home at Brockley until his mother's death in 1937. He then lived in Notting Hill, and from about 1946 lived in Harrow on the Hill. In 1970 he fell ill after breaking a bone in his hip and resided at Calvary Nursing Home, Harrow until his death in 1974.

A volume of essays *Epoch and Artist* was published by Faber in 1959, followed by *The Fatigue* (1965), *The Tribune's Visitations* (1969) and *The Introduction to The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1972). *The Sleeping Lord* (1974) and *The Roman Quarry* (1981) were published posthumously.

In 1955 he was awarded the CBE, and also the Harriet Monroe memorial prize. In 1960 he was awarded the degree of D. Litt from The University of Wales and became both Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a member of the Royal Watercolour Society in 1961. He was awarded the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales Gold medal in 1964 and the Welsh Arts Council Literature Prize in 1969.

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## Natur a chynnwys | Scope and content

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Twenty-three letters, 1940-1971, from David Jones, artist and writer, to his friend T. F. (Tom) Burns, nineteen of which date from the period 1940-1944 and form a valuable source for the life and work of the writer during the war years. The principal subjects discussed in the others are the history of Wales, the early history of the compass, Malory's *Morte Arthur* and the writer's experiences in the First World War. Twelve of these letters were printed, wholly or in part, by René Hague in *Dai Greatcoat: A self-portrait of David Jones in his Letters* (London, 1980).

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## Nodiadau | Notes

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### Nodiadau teitl | Title notes

### Ffynhonnell | Immediate source of acquisition

Mr T. F. Burns; London; Purchase; 1982.

**Ffurf arall ar gael | Alternative form available**

For photocopies of the letters see NLW Facs 392.

**Cyfyngiadau ar fynediad | Restrictions on access**

Readers consulting modern papers in the National Library of Wales are required to abide by the conditions noted on the 'Modern papers - data protection' form issued with their readers' tickets.

**Amodau rheoli defnydd | Conditions governing use**

Usual copyright laws apply.

**Rhestrau cymorth | Finding aids**

The contents are indexed in greater detail in Handlist of Manuscripts in the National Library of Wales, vol. 8 (Aberystwyth, 1999).

**Disgrifiadau deunydd | Related material**

A typescript copy of the letters is available in NLW Facs. 392.

**Nodiadau eraill | Other notes**

- **Statws cyhoeddiad | Publication status:** Published
- **Dynodwr sefydliad | Institution identifier:** Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru = The National Library of Wales

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**Pwyntiau mynediad | Access points**

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- Malory, Thomas, Sir, 15th cent. Morte d'Arthur. (pwnc) | (subject)
- Jones, David, 1895-1974 -- Correspondence (pwnc) | (subject)
- Burns, T. F. (Thomas Ferrier), 1906-1995 -- Correspondence (pwnc) | (subject)
- Compass -- History. (pwnc) | (subject)
- World War, 1914-1918 -- Personal narratives. (pwnc) | (subject)
- Wales -- History. (pwnc) | (subject)

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**Llyfryddiaeth | Bibliography**

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René Hague, Dai Greatcoat: A Self-portrait of David Jones in his Letters (London, 1980).