

## THOMAS, DAVID (1880 - 1967), educationalist, author and pioneer of the Labour Party in north Wales

**Name:** David Thomas  
**Date of birth:** 1880  
**Date of death:** 1967  
**Spouse:** Elizabeth Ann Thomas (née Williams)  
**Child:** Ffion Mai Jones (née Thomas)  
**Parent:** Elizabeth Thomas (née Jones)  
**Parent:** David Thomas  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** educationalist, author and pioneer of the Labour Party in north Wales  
**Area of activity:** Education; Literature and Writing; Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** Mary Auronwy James

Born 16 July 1880 son of David Thomas and his wife Elizabeth (née Jones), Quarry Cottage, Llanfechain, Montgomeryshire. He was educated at Llanfechain and Llanfyllin schools with one term at Oswestry grammar school before going to work in a clothes shop in Llanfyllin. Soon afterwards he went to the British school there as a pupil-teacher (1895-99), later obtaining a post as uncertificated teacher at Pen-sarn, near Amlwch, at Bridgend, Glamorganshire, and then Walton-on-Thames. He took the opportunity to attend a class in London on Saturdays to prepare himself for an examination for a teacher's certificate. Afterwards he taught at Cradley; Rhostryfan (1905-09); Tal-y-sarn, Caernarfonshire (1909-20); and Bangor Central School (1922-45). He worked on a farm near Wrexham during World War I as a conscientious objector and was for a short period (1920-22) secretary of the North Wales Labour Council, living in the neighbourhood of Newtown.

He worked energetically to form labour unions and branches of the Independent Labour Party in north Wales, assisting in founding the Caernarfonshire Labour Council in 1912 and the North Wales Labour Council in 1914. He took a leading part in the debate on Socialism in *Y Herald Cymraeg* in 1908, followed by the publication of his first book, *Y Werin a'i Theyrnas* (1910), which left its influence on a number of unionists and Welsh Labour members. He took a keen interest in adult education. He was a tutor of classes held by the Workers' Educational Association in Caernarfonshire for a long period (1928-59), and he maintained an official connection with the society until his death. In 1944 he commenced the publication of *Lleufer*, the Workers' Educational Association periodical which he edited until 1965. He gained a M.A. degree for a dissertation on 'A study of a rural and maritime community in the nineteenth century, with special reference to the relation between agriculture and shipping' (Liverpool; 1928), and an hon. M.A. degree of the University of Wales in 1960.

He was a very effective speaker and radio broadcaster and he wrote many articles, pamphlets and books on a wide range of political, literary and historical topics, including: *Y Blaid Lafur a Dinasyddiaeth y Gweithiwr* (1912), *Y Cynganeddion Cymreig* (1923), *Y Ddinasyddiaeth Fawr* (1938), *Hen longau a llongwyr Cymru* (1949), *Cau'r tiroedd comin* (1952), *Llafur a senedd i Gymru: ysgrifau, llythyrau a sgyrsiau* (1954), a biography of *Silyn (Robert Silyn Roberts) 1871-1930* (1956), and *Ann Griffiths a'i theulu* (1963); also 'Glendid iaith', a weekly column on grammar in *Y Faner* (c. 1957-62). As a tribute to him he was presented with the volume, *Ben Bowen Thomas* (ed.), *Lleufer y werin; cyfrol deyrnged i David Thomas, M.A.* (1965), and his autobiography was published posthumously, *Diolch am gael byw* (1968). Some of his papers are kept at the National Library of Wales.

He married 26 July 1919, Elizabeth Ann Williams, New Broughton (died 1955 after a very long illness) and they had a son and a daughter. He died at the home of his daughter, the widow of *Herman Jones*, at 2 Pen-y-bryn, Burry Port, Carmarthenshire on 27 June 1967.

### Author

Dr Mary Auronwy James

### Sources

His autobiography

D. Ben Rees, *Cymry adnabyddus, 1952-1972* (Liverpool 1978)(1978)

*The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, Aberdŷr*

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