

DAVIES (or DAVID), THOMAS ESSILE (Dewi Wyn o Essyllt; 1820 - 1891), poet and editor

Name: Thomas Essile Davies

Pseudonym: Dewi Wyn O Essyllt

Date of birth: 1820

Date of death: 1891

Spouse: Jane Davies (née Matthews)

Child: Catherine David

Child: John Davies

Child: Edward Davies

Parent: Elizabeth David

Parent: William David

Gender: Male

Occupation: poet and editor

Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Poetry; Printing and Publishing

Author: Thomas John Morgan

Born 20 June 1820 at Dinas Powis, Glamorganshire, son of William (not 'Edward,' the name given in the obituary notice by [Walcyn Wyn](#) in *Y Geninen*, 1891) and Elizabeth David. William David was a miller, and it was in 'Y Felin' (the mill) that he lived; 'miller and farmer' was the description accorded to him in the newspapers when his distinguished son died, but in the entry of his son's birth in the S. Andrew's parish register he is shown as a 'labourer.' When the christening was recorded on 9 July 1820 the date of birth was not given, but it is to be found on his tombstone and is the same as that given by most of the newspapers when describing his career at the time of his death, although some of them (e.g. *Western Mail*, 2 February 1891; *News of the Week*, 7 February 1891) give the date as 15 June.

The surname consistently used on all official documents was 'David,' and the only baptismal name was 'Thomas.' In his marriage certificate his name is given as 'Thomas David,' and this, too, is how his name is given in the four entries relating to the christening of his children. Although he generally used the form 'Davies' (e.g. in *Ceinion Essyllt*), the name carved on his tombstone is 'Thomas Essile David.' The middle name 'Essile' (corresponding to the 'Essyllt' in his bardic name) was probably added by him in order to add lustre to his somewhat plebeian name. He hit upon 'Essyllt' under the mistaken impression that 'Essyllwg' was the ancient name for Glamorgan (see [Lloyd](#), *A History of Wales*, 282).

[Walcyn Wyn](#) (loc. cit.) says that he was married when he was about 21 years of age; and the year given by the newspapers, e.g. *News of the Week*, 7 February 1891, is 1841. The correct date of the marriage, however, is 22 October 1842. It may not be unfair to assume that the date of the wedding was pushed back a few months because the eldest child was born somewhat earlier than was expected; the child was, in fact, christened 27 April 1843. The wedding took place at S. Andrew's church, the bride being Jane, daughter of Edward and Catherine Mathews of Dinas Powis and reputedly the cousin of [Edward Matthews](#) ('Matthews of Ewenny'). In the marriage certificate, Thomas David (whose father's name is again given as 'William') describes himself as a miller. When their son Edward was christened they gave their address as 'Three Horse Shoes.' According to the obituary notices the father was a farmer and shop-keeper as well as a miller.

In 1874 the family moved to Pontypridd. They were Calvinistic Methodists, and the bard was elected an elder at Graig chapel; later, towards the end of his life, he is said to have attended the services at Penuel, of which, however, he was not a member. In spite of this, however, his son John took Anglican orders and was rector of Llangovan, Monmouth, when he died, January 1888. Jane David died 28 December 1885 and the bard, her husband, 30 January 1891. In his later days he lodged at a house in Union Street, and when calling at the Hewitt Arms tavern, Pencoedcae, suddenly dropped dead. His grave is marked by a monument erected by 'the friends of the bard in Pontypridd and the Neighbourhood.' It bears an elegy written by [Brynfab](#) (Thomas Williams, 1848 - 1927).

His eisteddfod productions, written in the classical metres, were very numerous. He won the prize for the best *awdl* at the Dowlais eisteddfod, 1851. After that, his career as a competitor can be followed by going through his book *Ceinion Essyllt* (Cardiff, 1874), although it should be remembered that many of the pieces printed without comment were unsuccessful. He continued to compete long after the *Ceinion* had been published. A long list of his eisteddfod compositions is to be found in [Walcyn Wyn](#)'s memoir, where it will be noted that in one year alone, 1881, he produced three *awdlau* for the eisteddfod. He was regarded as a very successful competitor but, even in that age of eisteddfodic zeal, was considered to overindulge his competitive instincts. The *Ceinion* does not consist entirely of poetry, for there are some prose articles in the book; but there are nearly 600 pages in the volume; and to the work contained therein must be added the very considerable number of poems and articles written after 1874.

He edited *Y Gwladgarwr* (in which periodical he published some letters of biting criticism under the pseudonym Crito); *Y Fellten*; and *Cydymaith y Plentyn*. He was also for many years responsible for the poetry column in the *Weekly Mail*. He was a notable figure in his day and contributed in no small measure to the literary life and activities of east Glamorgan in the days of the 'Pontypridd clique'; but, if his works are read without prejudice, it must be confessed that there is in them very, very little that is worthy of remembrance.

Author

Professor Thomas John Morgan, (1907 - 1986)

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