

## DAVIES, DAVID, Llandinam (1818 - 1890), industrialist and Member of Parliament

**Name:** David Davies

**Date of birth:** 1818

**Date of death:** 1890

**Spouse:** Margaret Davies (née Jones)

**Child:** Edward Davies

**Parent:** Elisabeth Davies

**Parent:** David Davies

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** industrialist and Member of Parliament

**Place:** Llandinam

**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Politics, Government and Political Movements

**Author:** Ivor Bulmer-Thomas

Born at Llandinam, Montgomeryshire, 18 December 1818, the eldest of nine children of David and Elizabeth Davies. On leaving the village school at the age of 11, David Davies helped his father in farming and sawing timber on commission, and his prowess was such that in later life he boasted that he was always 'top sawyer.' When his father died in 1846 he was left with the care of several younger brothers and sisters. An invitation in the same year to make the foundation and approaches for a bridge over the Severn at Llandinam set him on a contractor's career, and in 1855 he built the first section of the Llanidloes and Newtown railway, eventually opened in 1859. He subsequently built, with various partners such as Thomas Savin, the following railways: Vale of Clwyd (opened in 1858), Oswestry and Newtown (1861), Newtown and Machynlleth (1862), Pembroke and Tenby (1863 -extended to Whitland, 1866), 'Manchester and Milford' (from Pencader to Aberystwyth, 1867), Van (Caersws to Van mines, 1871). The engineer for most of these lines was [Benjamin Piercy](#), whom Davies accompanied in 1862 when he went to Sardinia to advise the company given the concession for railways in that island.

In 1864 David Davies took a lease of coal in the Upper Rhondda Valley and sank the Parc and Maendy pits. David Davies and Co. was formed as a private company under his chairmanship in 1867 to work these 'Ocean Merthyr' pits, and new collieries were sunk — Dare (1868), Western and Eastern (1872), Garw (1884), and Lady Windsor (1885). In 1887 the output had so increased that it was deemed advisable to set up a limited liability company, the Ocean Coal Company Ltd. The inability of the Taff Vale railway and the Bute docks at Cardiff to cope with the Ocean traffic led Davies to promote a new dock at Barry with a railway connection from the Rhondda. The project was carried through after a severe parliamentary fight, and was brought to completion in 1889.

His industrial enterprises made Davies a man of wealth, and he bought various estates and entered public life. In 1865 he unsuccessfully contested Cardiganshire against another Liberal, but in 1874 and again in 1880 he was returned unopposed for Cardigan district. He was returned in 1885 after a contest, but in 1886 he disagreed with Mr. Gladstone over home rule

for Ireland and was defeated by nine votes. He was one of the first governors of the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth and in 1875 was elected treasurer, a post which he held till 1887. He was returned unopposed in 1889 to represent Llandinam on the first Montgomeryshire county council.

In 1851 Davies married Margaret Jones, of Llanfair Caereinion. They had one child, EDWARD (1852 - 1898). Davies died 20 July 1890.

Davies was a 'self-made' capitalist in an age of expansion. The simple virtues of his youth of penury were unspoilt by the great wealth which he acquired and which he distributed to religious and educational causes and deserving individuals with a generous hand. A Calvinistic Methodist by upbringing, he was imbued with a deep religious sense and was a rigid Puritan in his attitude to drink and Sunday observance. His speech was untutored but with a homely eloquence and a native humour.

## Author

Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, (1900)

## Sources

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies (1894)* (2nd ed.), 1894;

Goronwy Jones, *David Davies (1818-1890) Llandinam*, 1913;

Ivor Thomas, *Top Sawyer a biography of David Davies of Llandinam (Carmarthen 1938)*, 1938;

C. P. Gasquoine, *The Story of the Cambrian: a biography of a railway (Oswestry 1922)*, 1922;

Llandinam papers in N.L.W.;

*The South Wales Coal Annual (Cardiff 1903-1937)*, 1906;

*History of the Barry Railway Company, 1884-1921 (Cardiff 1923)*, 1923.

## Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Cardiganshire Parliamentary Election address \(1866\) of David Davies](#) 

NLW Archives: [General Election 1885: Mr. David Davies's Candidature: Meeting at Aberystwyth](#) 

NLW Archives: [Cardigan County Election, 1885: Ballot Paper](#) 

NLW Archives: [Mr Bowen Rowlands' Supporters are respectfully requested to Vote as shewn below](#) 

Wikipedia Article: [David Davies](#) 

## Additional Links

NLW Archives: [David Davies of Llandinam Papers](#) 

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