

## DAVIES, JOHN (Ossian Gwent; 1839 - 1892), poet

**Name:** John Davies  
**Pseudonym:** Ossian Gwent  
**Date of birth:** 1839  
**Date of death:** 1892  
**Parent:** Anne Davies  
**Parent:** Evan Davies  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** poet  
**Area of activity:** Poetry  
**Author:** Thomas John Morgan

Born 30 January 1839 at Cardigan, son of Evan and Anne Davies. It is said that Evan Davies, the father, had considerable skill as a poet, though he produced very little. He was a Methodist elder. The family moved to Rhymney when John was still young, and his schooling was very inadequate. He served his apprenticeship as a carpenter in one of the Rhymney factories, and, in addition, became a pattern-maker. For some time he lived and worked at Merthyr, where he came into contact with the leading literary personalities of the town, e.g. [Dafydd Morgannwg](#) (D. W. Jones, 1832 - 1905). He also lived for a short time at Pontypridd before returning to Rhymney, where he spent the remainder of his life. He died 24 April 1892. There is very little to be said about his career, which was uneventful, except that he was a Calvinistic Methodist elder and that he never married.

In 1873 Hughes (Wrexham) published his *Caniadau* (the date of publication is not shown on the fly-leaf), and in 1898 [J. E. Southall](#) of Newport, Monmouth, issued a volume of his hitherto unpublished works under the title *Blodau Gwent*. In his introduction the publisher tells us a little about the poet's life, his information being derived from his brother-in-law, T. W. Davies of Rhymney. There is an obituary notice by [T. Twynog Jeffreys](#) in the S. David's Day issue of Y Geninen, 1894, 33-7. [Islwyn](#) wrote a short prologue for the *Caniadau*; it is probable that he and Ossian Gwent knew each other well. There was considerable literary activity at that time in the valleys and industrial areas of Monmouthshire and east Glamorgan, and competing in the eisteddfodau provided the stimulus for and was the principal expression of this literary activity, this striving for culture; yet, although Ossian lived surrounded by all this eisteddfodic enthusiasm and fervour, and although he was acquainted with the most eminent eisteddfod enthusiasts, he 'never framed an englyn, never composed an awdl, and never won a chair,' says [Jeffreys](#). Indeed, these two books of poetry are totally different from the characteristic works of the period; not only because they lack pieces composed for the eisteddfod but because they are devoid of the typical atmosphere surrounding the rhyming fraternity and the sodality of the bards. There can be no doubt that Ossian had a retiring disposition. His two small books are devoted for the most part to poems about nature; and although some of the pseudo- or second-hand mysticism of his age has crept into his songs of nature and some of its smug morality into his lyrics, he unquestionably had the right lyrical qualities and was a greater poet than many of the better-known literary characters of his day. The pity is that he did not live fifty years later.

### Author

Professor Thomas John Morgan, (1907 - 1986)

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