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## THOMAS, DAVID EMLYN (1892 - 1954), politician and trade unionist



**Name:** David Emlyn Thomas  
**Date of birth:** 1892  
**Date of death:** 1954  
**Spouse:** Bessie Thomas (née Thomas)  
**Parent:** James Thomas  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** politician and trade unionist  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** John Graham Jones

Born 16 September 1892 at Maesteg, Glamorganshire, one of nine children. His father James Thomas was a native of Cilgerran, Pembrokeshire, and his mother hailed from Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire. He spent short periods of his childhood at Cilgerran and Cardigan. He was educated at elementary schools at Maesteg, and attended evening classes in mining and mine surveying which enabled him to qualify as an engineer. In 1906, at 13 years of age, he began working as clerk at the Oakwood and Garth collieries, he moved to a colliery at Llantrisant and then to the Caerau colliery, Maesteg. Thomas became a full-time official of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1919 and served as secretary to [Vernon Hartshorn](#) and [Ted Williams](#) (see [Williams, Sir Edward John below](#)). In the same year he joined the Labour Party. He became the Aberdare area secretary of the S.W.M.F. in 1934, and he and his family moved to live in the area. In 1936 he was elected by an overwhelming majority as the miners' agent of the Merthyr and Aberdare valleys of the south Wales area of the N.U.M. as successor to [Noah Ablett](#), and he became an advisory member of the south Wales area executive of the N.U.M. He became an authority on workmen's compensation.

On 5 December 1946 at a by-election Thomas became M.P. (Lab.) for the Aberdare division in succession to [George Hall](#). He continued to represent this constituency in parliament until his death. He was re-elected with a majority of almost 28,000 votes in 1951. Emlyn Thomas was a quiet, modest individual - 'the gentle man in Welsh politics' - who always served his constituents conscientiously. He was elected chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Labour group in the House of Commons in 1949-50. His political papers are in the custody of the National Library of Wales. He was a native Welsh - speaker, a deacon and a Sunday school teacher at Ebenezer Independent chapel, Trecynon, Aberdare. He was active in a number of cultural societies in the Cynon Valley, a member of Trecynon Choral Union and numerous *eisteddfod* committees. Gardening was one of his main interests.

He married in 1923 Bessie Thomas (she died 10 September 1953), a schoolteacher at Maesteg. They had a son and two daughters. Following a heart attack he died on 20 June 1954 at his home 65 Broniestyn Terrace, Trecynon, Aberdare.

**Author**

Dr John Graham Jones

## Sources

*Who was who?*

*Dod's Parliamentary Companion*

*Western Mail*, 31 March 1936

*The Merthyr Express*, 9 August 1947

*Aberdare Leader*, 14 December 1946, 19 September 1953 and 26 June 1954

*The Times*, 21 June 1954

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

## Further Reading

NLW Archives: [General Election: Thursday, October 25th. D. Emlyn Thomas, The Labour Candidate](#)

Wikipedia Article: [David Thomas](#)

## Additional Links

NLW Archives: [D. Emlyn Thomas Papers](#)

Wikidata: [Q5240339](#)

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