

GAMBOLD family.

There was a family of this name in Cardigan town in the 17th and 18th century. When **Lewis Morris** of Anglesey was imprisoned at Cardigan in 1753, and released on bail (*Morris Letters*, f.n. on i, 223), he stayed at the house of a William Gambold - conceivably, but not very probably, the William Gambold with whom the present notice closes. Further, a Gambold or 'Gambwil' is repeatedly mentioned in the *Morris Letters*; this was the captain of the customs-cutter *Pelham* at Holyhead (information from customs records at Holyhead), and in one place (*Morris Letters*, i, 446) he is described as 'having introduced the Cardiganshire exercise among our squadrons.'

But the first Gambold who merits attention is WILLIAM GAMBOLD (1672 - 1728), cleric and grammarian. His son, bishop Gambold (in a letter printed in the preface to the first edition of **John Walters's** *English-Welsh Dictionary*), states that he was born 10 August 1672, 'of reputable parents' who destined him for the church and gave him good schooling. But according to Foster (*Alumni Oxonienses*) he was eighteen, 'pauper puer,' son of William Gambold of Cardigan, when he matriculated at S. Mary Hall, Oxford, 23 May 1693. He migrated to Exeter College in 1694, but there is no record of graduation. On 1 December 1709 (*West Wales Records*, ii, 226, iii, 250) he became rector of Puncteston with Llanychaer, Pembrokeshire, but it would seem that he had previously been curate there, for in November 1707 (*Cymm. Trans.*, 1904-5, 186) he was keeping school at Llanychaer. His son tells us that he was a most devoted parish priest. At Oxford he had been a friend of **Edward Lhuyd**, who acknowledges help given to him by Gambold in preparing **Lhuyd's** additions in Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia*. As early as 1707, Gambold was planning a Welsh dictionary, and this became his main occupation later on, when an accident disabled him from parochial work. It was finished in 1722, but Gambold failed to get money to publish it. In the *Morris Letters* (ii, 140-1, 221, 224), we hear of the bishop trying to sell the manuscript to the lexicographer **Thomas Richards** of Coychurch (1710 - 1790) - the Morrises (i, 114, ii, 150, 233), more suo, disparage the work. Later (c. 1770), the manuscript came into the hands of another lexicographer, **John Walters**; today it is at the National Library of Wales. William Gambold published in 1727 *A Grammar of the Welsh Language*; it was reprinted after his day (*Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry*, 346-7). He died 13 September 1728.

Of William Gambold's five sons, far and away the most celebrated is the eldest, JOHN GAMBOLD (1711 - 1771), Moravian bishop. His career touches Wales only at intervals, and is well sketched (with full references) by Alexander Gordon in the *D.N.B.*; the present notice may therefore lean more to the Welsh side. Born 10 April 1711 at Puncteston, he matriculated 10 October 1726 from Christ Church, where he came to know Charles Wesley and became one of the 'Oxford Methodists.' He graduated in 1730, was ordained in 1733, and in 1735 was appointed vicar of Stanton Harcourt (near Oxford); but in 1739 he met Zinzendorff and began to lean towards Moravianism. Resigning his living in 1742, he married in 1743 and returned to Pembrokeshire (details of his journey, *Cymm.*, xlv, 28), to keep school in Market-street, Haverfordwest. But in 1744 he removed to London and formally joined the Brethren's Church, in which he became a bishop in 1753. **Richard Morris** had contacts with him in London (*Morris Letters*, ii, 140-1, 221), and even his amused cynicism cannot help noting how the bishop 'despises riches, having thrown up a good living to take up his present way of life, wherein he has no income at all, and delights in appearing poor and slovenly' - his brother **Lewis** (*Morris Letters*, ii, 224) comments: 'such were the bishops of the primitive times.' In 1768, Gambold's health broke down, and he returned (as congregation pastor) to Haverfordwest, where he died 13 September 1771 (on the anniversary of his father's death); he was buried behind the Brethren's chapel. Over and above his mission-work, Gambold was a considerable Greek and Patristic scholar. His theology was 'quietist' and mystical. He had not forgotten his native language: in 1760, he revised and saw through the press a Welsh translation (*Un Ymadrodd ar Bumtheg ynghylch Iesu Grist*) of Zinzendorff's *Berlin Discourses*, by **Evan Williams** (1724 - 1759); and in 1770 he published a Welsh Moravian hymn-book, *Ychydig Hymnau allan o Lyfr Hymnau Cynulleidfaoedd y Brodyr* (see *Cymm.*, xlv, 112) - three of the hymns were taken from **vicar Prichard**, the other thirty-four were Gambold's own versions of English Moravian hymns; it must be confessed that they are rather stiff.

Two of William Gambold's other sons deserve a word. The third son was GEORGE GAMBOLD (died 1755). He, too, was for a while a Methodist; we have a letter of his (T.L., 1256, 28 December 1744) to **Howell Harris**, and in 1748 he was an exhorter. He continued his brother's school at Haverfordwest. In his turn, he too became a Moravian, and with **John Sparks** founded the society which was in 1763 to become the Moravian congregation at Haverfordwest - the only one in Wales.

On the other hand, the youngest of the brothers, WILLIAM GAMBOLD, never left the Methodist movement. He began to exhort in 1766, and itinerated in North Wales (*Methodistiaeth Cymru*, ii, 304); he was a great friend of **Howell Davies's** (*Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd*, iv, 55). None the less, he was on the friendliest terms with the Brethren, and interesting reminiscences of his on the religious history of Pembrokeshire have been preserved in the Moravian archives at Haverfordwest (*Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd*, iv, nos. 1 and 2). It is just possible, though unlikely, that he was the William Gambold named at the beginning of the present notice; but by 1770, at latest, he was farming near Llawhaden. He was still alive in 1794.

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Sources

References given in the text

Images

John Spilsbury, Abraham Louis Brandt, **The Revd. John Gambold, M.A** formerly Minister of Stanton Harcourt, late one of the Bishops of the Unitas fra

Works

William Gambold, *A Welsh grammar. Or, A short and easie introduction to the Welsh tongue: in 2 parts*(Carmarthen 1727)

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