

## MAURICE, Sir WILLIAM (1542 - 1622), politician

**Name:** William Maurice  
**Date of birth:** 1542  
**Date of death:** 1622  
**Spouse:** Margaret Maurice (née Lacon)  
**Child:** William Wynn Maurice  
**Child:** Ellis Maurice  
**Parent:** Ellen Puleston  
**Parent:** Maurice ap Ellis  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** politician  
**Area of activity:** Politics, Government and Political Movements  
**Author:** Arthur Herbert Dodd

was the eldest son of [Moris ap Elise](#) (died 1575) of Clennau, a member of an old Caernarvonshire family which, in the course of the last century had accumulated the most extensive and compact freehold estate in south Caernarvonshire, centred on the manor house of Clennau (built c. 1550) and extending into Anglesey and Merioneth. Maurice, the first of the family to adopt the English form of surname, spent much of his life in the effort to extend and consolidate this estate, a task involving him in constant litigation and frequent turbulence. His three marriages helped in the process, the first, to Margaret Wyn Lacon (Lakyn or Lake), *aet.* 14, bringing in the Shropshire estate of Porkington (now Brogyntyn) to which she was heiress. During Elizabeth's later years the civil and military administration of Caernarvonshire was virtually divided between [Gwydir](#) and [Clennau](#); as well as deputy lieutenant, Maurice was sheriff of Caernarvonshire in the parliament of 1593 and Beaumaris in that of 1601; but he made no mark there till James I's first parliament, where he was a tireless debater and spokesman of the party favouring union with Scotland under the joint name of the kingdom of Great Britain, which appealed to him as a Welsh patriot. He claimed to have suggested James's assumption of the title before parliament met (possibly on the occasion of his knighthood, as Sir William Morris, on 23 July 1603), but his sister's playful allusion to him as the king's 'godfather' has been taken too literally: there is no evidence that he enjoyed James's personal friendship. He also opposed the Shrewsbury monopoly of Welsh cloth sales, but upheld the rights of Convocation, the jurisdiction of the Council of Ludlow, the royal claim to purveyance and generous parliamentary subsidies. With little formal education, he was widely read in theology, law, and politics, which were well represented in his library. He was a staunch Anglican and royalist, and believed that Welsh national aspirations were best achieved in partnership with the other British peoples; the bard [Richard Owen](#) aptly describes him (Brogyntyn MS. 3/376) as 'penn plaid brytaniaid.' His death (10 August 1622) is recorded on a tombstone (now almost obliterated) in Penmorfa church. His surviving heiress Elin, lady (Francis) Eure (1578 - 1626), daughter of his eldest son, [William Wyn Maurice](#), and widow of Sir Francis Walsingham's secretary, John Owen of Bodsilin, Anglesey, was the mother of [Sir John Owen](#) (1600 - 1666), heir to Clennau and [William Owen](#) (1607 - 1670), heir to Porkington.

### Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

### Sources

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