

GRIFFITH OF PENRHYN, Caernarfonshire.

The family was perhaps the first in North Wales to emerge as the owners of a modern landed estate. They claimed descent from [Ednyfed Fychan](#) through his son Tudur. The conventional pedigrees attribute the acquisition of Penrhyn and Cochwillan (see [Williams of Cochwillan](#)) to the marriage (c. 1300-1310) of Griffith ap Heilyn ap Tudur ab Ednyfed Fychan (died c. 1340) to Eva, daughter and heiress of Griffith ap Tudur ap Madog ap Iarddur; her possessions are said to have formed part of the estates of Iarddur, supposed founder of one of the so-called 'fifteen tribes', who had received them as part of a grant to him of the commote of Arllechwedd Uchaf by [Llywelyn the Great](#). No record evidence exists of such a grant. The surveys of Anglesey and Caernarvon of 1352 prove the existence of Iarddur, but provide no support for the story of the grant by [Llywelyn the Great](#). The pedigrees appear to have oversimplified a complicated process and, in particular, they attribute the marriage with Eva to the wrong generation and over-emphasize its importance. (Dwnn, *Visitations*, ii, 130-1; Thomas, 'Genealogical Account of the Families of Penrhyn and Cochwillan' in Williams, *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802), 163-7; *Rec. Caern.*, 13).

The patrimony of Tudur ab Ednyfed Fychan undoubtedly lay in the Four Cantrefs, and record evidence supports the testimony of the pedigrees that his descendants, in the line whence came the families of Griffith of Penrhyn and [Williams of Cochwillan](#), were settled at Nant, in Englefield, and Llangynhafal, in the vale of Clwyd. So far from being settled at Penrhyn early in the 14th century, the 'Griffith' family continued to live in north-east Wales until the close of the century; but three marriage alliances during the century brought them substantial property in Caernarvonshire and Anglesey.

GWILYM AP GRIFFITH AP HEILYN (died c. 1370)

Third in descent from Tudur ab Ednyfed. He married (c. 1340) Eva, daughter of Griffith ap Tudur ap Madog ap Iarddur. Her father (died c. 1310) and brother Gwilym ap Griffith of Llaniestyn, in Anglesey (died c. 1375) were landowners of some note in Englefield and in various townships in Anglesey (Twrgarw, Penwyllys) and Caernarvonshire (Bodfeio). She was probably one of the co-heirs of her brother in 'Gafael Iarddur' in Bodfeio in 1352, and it was almost certainly this marriage which brought Cochwillan to her husband's family, together with a share of her family's lands in Anglesey. By her brother's will, dated 1375, her son, Griffith ap Gwilym (died 1405 - see (2) below) inherited further lands in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire.

GRIFFITH AP GWILYM (died 1405)

He married (c. 1360) Generys, daughter and heiress of Madog ap Goronwy Fychan who was third in descent from [Ednyfed Fychan](#) through his son, [Goronwy](#), ancestor of the Tudors (see under [Ednyfed Fychan](#)). She brought to her husband lands at Gwredog in Anglesey, together with her share of the family lands at 'Gafael Goronwy ab Ednyfed,' in the township of Cororion in Caernarvonshire. 'Gafael Goronwy ab Ednyfed' was the nucleus of the Penrhyn estate and the whole Gafael corresponds roughly to the present Penrhyn demesne, or park. This marriage marks the first link between the Griffith family and Penrhyn, but Griffith ap Gwilym lived throughout his life in north-east Wales. With his brother BLEDDYN, he died in rebellion with [Owain Glyndwr](#) before October 1406, but Bledwyn's descendants, together with those of Griffith ap Gwilym, through his youngest son, Rhys, continued to be represented in Flintshire and Denbighshire until the 16th century. The personal connection of the family with Anglesey and Caernarvonshire began with the eldest and second sons of Griffith ap Gwilym.

GWILYM AP GRIFFITH (died 1431)

The eldest son of Griffith and Generys. He married (c. 1390) his kinswoman, Morfydd, daughter of [Goronwy ap Tudur \(ob. 1382\) of Penmynydd](#) (see under [Ednyfed Fychan](#)). Gwilym thereby gained a further share in 'Gafael Goronwy ab Ednyfed' (Penrhyn) as well as lands in Anglesey. In 1389, Gwilym and his younger brother, ROBIN AP GRIFFITH, were granted by their father his lands in Caernarvonshire and Anglesey and it was probably this step which led to their firm establishment in the area. Lands in Bodfeio were given to Robin, who was the ancestor of the family of [Williams of Cochwillan](#). Gwilym was the real founder of the Penrhyn family, but his precise place of residence before 1400 is not known. His wife's dowry had strengthened his hold on 'Gafael Goronwy ab Ednyfed' (Penrhyn) but his main possessions were in the commotes of Menai and Dindaethwy in Anglesey. His wife's mother (Myfanwy) and brother (Tudur ap Goronwy) were alive in 1397 and might be expected to have lived at Penmynydd; nevertheless, Gwilym ap Griffith is described as 'of Penmynydd' in 1400 and 1403, and his will, dated 1430, was signed there. From 1391 to 1397 he held various crown offices in Anglesey, being sheriff in 1396-7.

His wife's uncles (Rhys, Gwilym, and Maredudd ap Tudur) gave full support to their cousin, [Owain Glyndwr](#), and see under [Ednyfed Fychan](#); Gwilym himself was more cautious, but he was forced by family and other circumstances to throw in his lot with the rebels about 1402. (As has been said, his father and uncle died in [Glyndwr](#)'s service.) His brother, Robin of Cochwillan, was also in rebellion but abandoned [Glyndwr](#) before 1408, when he appears as a crown official in Caernarvonshire. Gwilym also made his peace with the king before November 1407, when he was restored to his forfeited possessions and was granted, in addition, the lands of twenty-seven Anglesey adherents of [Glyndwr](#) who had probably died in rebellion. By 1410 he had been granted the forfeited lands of his wife's uncles, Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur, both of whom

adhered to [Glyndŵr](#) to the last. His will, dated 1430, also refers to lands which he had obtained from his Tudor kinsmen; his brother-in-law, Tudur ap Goronwy, appears to have died c. 1400 and his share of the Tudor possessions undoubtedly came into Gwilym's hands. In all, Gwilym ap Griffith appears to have succeeded, through his father's marriage, his own, and the effects of the Glyndŵr rebellion, in gaining control of most of the patrimony of the Tudors; not the least important of the probable consequences was the departure of [Owain Tudor](#) to seek his fortunes at the court of Henry V.

The date of death of Gwilym's first wife is not known. Some time after 1405 he married Joan, daughter of Sir William Stanley of Hooton, Ches., thus beginning a long and profitable connexion with the rising star of that family. His son by his first wife inherited only his mother's property at Penmynydd, and he was the ancestor of the later Theodores of that place (see [Tudor family, of Penmynydd](#)). Gwilym ap Griffith died in 1431, leaving his great possessions in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire to his son by the second marriage. (Penrhyn manuscripts, *passim*; *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, 1951, 34-72; J. R. Jones, 'The development of the Penrhyn estate to 1431', University of Wales M.A. thesis, unpublished.)

From 1431 to 1531 the son, grandson, and great-grandson of Gwilym ap Griffith (each named Gwilym) held the estate and added to it. (During the 15th century the surname 'Griffith' became established and 'Gwilym' became 'William' in non-Welsh records.) All three showed outstanding skill in steering a safe and profitable course through the dangerous waters of 15th century politics; in particular, they allied themselves with prominent English houses, especially the pliant Stanleys - a process which began with the marriage of Gwilym ap Griffith to Joan Stanley of Hooton.

GWILYM FYCHAN (c. 1420 - 1483)

The son of the marriage of Gwilym ap Griffith and Joan Stanley, was under the tutelage of his Stanley kinsmen until he came of age (Penrhyn MSS. 17-18). In 1440 he received letters of denization, freeing him from the operation of the penal laws passed against Welshmen during the Glyndŵr revolt, on condition that he did not marry a Welsh woman or hold office; the ban on holding office was raised in 1443 on the ground that his mother was a Stanley (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1436-41 (416), 1441-6 (164)). He married, before 1447, Ales, daughter and heiress of Sir Richard Dalton of Apthorp, Northamptonshire; the marriage almost certainly reflects the Stanley connection, for Ales Dalton was grand-daughter by her second marriage of Isabel de Pilkington whose daughter by Thomas de Lathom, her first husband, brought Lathom and Knowsley to the Stanleys. (Dwnn, *Visitations*, ii, 155; Penrhyn MSS. 1-4, 7-9, 13; G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, iv, 205 n. c.; *D.N.B.*, liv., 75.) He married (2) Gwenllian, daughter of Iorwerth ap David; ROBERT, his eldest son by this marriage, was the ancestor of the family of Griffith of Plasnewydd, Anglesey, and Llanfairis-gaer, Caernarfonshire; EDMUND, the second son, founded the estate of [Carreg-lwyd, Anglesey](#). See [Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 47, 56, 57, and articles [Griffith of Carreg-lwyd](#) and [George Griffith, 1601 - 1666](#). In 1451 he was member of a commission appointed to examine the reasons why the revenues of Merioneth were in arrear (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1446-52, 480) and between 1457 and 1463 he was deputy to various chamberlains of North Wales (Davies, *Conway and Menai Ferries*, 47; P.R.O. Min. Acc., 1154/3, 1180/3). He does not appear to have held the office of chamberlain. He was probably the William Griffith who, as 'marshall of the King's Hall,' received grants from Edward IV in 1462 and 1464, and he served on a number of North Wales commissions during Edward's reign (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1461-7 (117, 293, 329), 1467-77 (54, 490), 1476-85 (121)). He was dead by 13 September 1483 (Penrhyn MSS. 38-9). A number of contemporary poets sang his praises - [Cynwrig ap Dafydd Goch](#), [Dafydd ab Edmwnd](#), [Guto'r Glyn](#), [Rhys Goch Eryri](#), and [Robin Ddu](#) (Mostyn MSS. 148, 493, 495, 498, 542; [Llanstephan MS 118](#), [Llanstephan MS 78](#); *Gwaith Dafydd ab Edmwnd* (ed. T. Roberts), 107; *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (ed. J. Ll. Williams and I. Williams), 52, 55; *Iolo Goch ac Eraill* (ed. H. Lewis, T. Roberts and I. Williams), 307; H. T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, 14).

WILLIAM GRIFFITH (c. 1445 - 1505/6)

The son and heir by the first marriage of GWILYM FYCHAN, is not always easy to distinguish him from his father. He married (1) Joan Troutbeck, widow of Sir William Butler of Bewsey, Ches.; her mother was Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas Stanley (c. 1406 - 1459), first baron Stanley; William Griffith was therefore nephew by marriage to Thomas, first earl of Derby (1435 - 1504) - another confirmation of the Stanley connection (Dwnn, *Visitations*, ii, 167; Penrhyn MSS. 12; *D.N.B.*, liv., 76; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, ii, 42). In 1476 he is described as 'king's servant' and 'marshall of the King's Hall' (an office held by his father) in a grant to him by Edward IV of an annuity of £18 5s.; the annuity was renewed by Richard III in March 1484 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1476-85, 18, 418). At Michaelmas 1483 he was appointed chamberlain of North Wales by Richard III; the appointment was confirmed by [Henry VII](#) within a month of Bosworth (Davies, *Conway and Menai Ferries*, 48; [Owen](#), *Manuscripts rel. to Wales in the Brit. Mus.*, ii, 147; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1485-94, 5). His record suggests that he followed very closely the lead of his kinsman, the time-serving earl of Derby, and a poem by [Lewis Môn](#) proves that immediately before Bosworth he shared with lord Strange, Derby's heir, his perilous imprisonment at Nottingham as hostage for his father's all-too-uncertain loyalty; presumably, he shared, too, the same narrow escape from death on the eve of the battle. [Tudur Aled](#) also refers, more obscurely, to this crisis in William Griffith's career. (Gairdner, *Richard III*, ed. 1898, 227-38; Mostyn MSS. 148, 467; *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. T. Gwynn Jones, i, 143.) His influential connections were not confined to the Stanley s.

He appears to have married, as his second wife, Elizabeth Grey, grand-daughter of Reginald, 3rd baron Grey of Ruthin (the enemy of [Owain Glyndŵr](#)) and first cousin to John Grey, lord Ferrers of Groby (1432 - 1461) who was the first husband of

Elizabeth Woodville, later queen of Edward IV. (*D.N.B.*, xxiii, 193, 197; [Williams](#), *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains*, 1802, 174.) The marriage must have brought him into personal contact with the powerful Greys and Woodvilles and it would explain the presence of a William Griffith as member of Edward IV's council on 8 August 1482. (Gairdner, op. cit., 338-9.)

Under [Henry VII](#) he continued to hold the chamberlainship of North Wales until 1490 when he was replaced by Sir Richard Pole (Davies, *Conway and Menai Ferries*, 48, 68.) He was knighted when Arthur was created prince of Wales in 1489 and he continued to serve on a number of North Wales commissions. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1485-94*, 86, 354.) He died 1505/6. (Penrhyn MSS. 44-5.) Among poets who sang to him are [Tudur Penllyn](#), [Dafydd Pennant](#), [Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn](#), [Lewis Môn](#), and [Tudur Aled](#). (Mostyn MSS. 148, 467, 504, 532, 535; *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. [T. Gwynn Jones](#), i, 142.)

WILLIAM GRIFFITH (c. 1480 - 1531)


Son of William Griffith. He does not appear in office until 1508 when he was described as 'King's Servant' and 'squire for the body,' and appointed chamberlain of North Wales; he continued to hold the office until his death, with the exception of a short break in 1509 when he made way for Charles Brandon, later duke of Suffolk. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1494-1509*, 569; Davies, *Conway and Menai Ferries*, 57; *L. and P. Henry VIII*, vol. I, part i, 257, 78, and vol. IV, part i, 1941; *D.N.B.*, vi, 218.) There is some evidence of personal links between the two men. Both were squires of the body at the same time, and in 1516 Brandon appointed Griffith as one of his deputy justices of North Wales, describing him in the instrument of appointment as his 'blood relation.' (Penrhyn MSS. 48.) Griffith served under Brandon in the French campaign of 1513; he was at the siege of Thérouanne, the battle of the Spurs, and the siege of Tournai in August 1513, and was knighted at Tournai 25 September 1513. (*L. and P. Henry VIII*, vol. I, part i, 1176, 1496, part ii, 2301, 2480, 2575.) Poems by [Lewis Môn](#), [Huw Llwyd ap Dafydd](#), [Tudur Aled](#), and [Gruffydd ap Tudur ap Hywel](#) refer to his part in the campaign. (Mostyn MSS. 148, 233, 520, 523, 537, 585; Cardiff MSS. 2, 103; *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. [T. Gwynn Jones](#), i, 146.) He appears also to have maintained close relationships with [Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Dynevor](#). His first wife was Jane, daughter of [Sir Thomas Stradling of St Donats, Glamorganshire](#), and his wife, Joan, daughter of [Thomas Mathew](#) of Radyr, Glamorganshire [Sir Thomas Stradling](#) died 1480, and his widow married shortly after [Sir Rhys ap Thomas](#), as his second wife. Poems to William Griffith by [Lewis Môn](#) emphasize the links between him and [Sir Rhys](#), whose son, [Griffith ap Rhys \(born c.1480\)](#) was a contemporary of William Griffith at Court. A Griffith of Penrhyn (almost certainly William Griffith) was present at the tournament held by [Sir Rhys](#) at Carew in 1507 (see articles [Stradling](#) and [Mathew](#); Mostyn MSS. 148, 470, 581; *Cambrian Register*, 1795, 49-144). His second wife was Jane, daughter of [John Puleston 'Hen' \(the Old\) of Bersham](#) (see article [Puleston family](#)); William, his eldest son by this marriage, founded the family of Griffith of Trefarthen ([Griffith, Pedigrees](#), 125, 185, and article [John Griffith, 16th century](#)). Apart from those named, the following poets wrote to him: [Mathew Brwmffild](#), [Dafydd Pennant](#), [Ifan Dyluniwr](#), [Dafydd Trefor](#), [Ifan ap Madog](#), [Lewis Daron](#), and [Tudur Aled](#). (Mostyn MSS. 148, 529, 532, 556, 559, 562, 566, 569, 572, 575; *Cynfeirdd Llyeyn*, ed. [Myrddin Fardd](#), 195; *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. [T. Gwynn Jones](#), i, 145.) He was one of three squires who were concerned with the Caerwys eisteddfod in 1523. (*Llên Cymru*, ii, 130.)

His eldest son, William, died young and he was succeeded by his second son

EDWARD GRIFFITH (1511 - 1540)

Born 18 May 1511 (P.R.O. Min. Acc., 4948), he was a correspondent of Thomas Cromwell, mainly in connection with his feud with [Richard Bulkeley of Beaumaris](#); he paid Cromwell an annuity of ten marks for some years and attempted, unsuccessfully, to gain possession of the Dominican friary at Bangor after its dissolution. He was probably the Edward Griffith who, as yeoman of the guard, was granted a water-mill in the lordship of Denbigh in 1537. He was acting on a number of commissions in North Wales until April of 1539, but in October of that year he was sent with Sir William Brereton (*D.N.B. Suppt.*, i, 264) to Ireland; his command (two grand captains, three petty captains, 250 archers, three priests, and two minstrels) was equivalent to that of Brereton and he was a member of the Irish privy council. He died of 'the flux' at Dublin 11 March 1540. He married Jane, daughter of [Sir John Puleston of Bersham](#). (*L. and P. Henry VIII*, viii, 122, 644, 925, xii, part i, 539 (14), 655, 1154, xiii, part i, 384 (91), 1289, xiv, part i, 732, 802, 803, 816, part ii, 40, 616, 759, 782, 1539; xv, 74, 82, 199, 327, 342, 355.) His death precipitated a long dispute between RHYS GRIFFITH his younger brother, who claimed the estates as heir male, and John Puleston, Edward Griffith's father-in-law, acting for his daughter and her three children (Jane, Catherine, and Ellen). Puleston asked Cromwell for the wardship of the children, and offered him £40 for his good offices; Rhys Griffith complained that during his absence in Ireland 'on the king's service,' his sister-in-law and her father had ransacked Penrhyn, leaving 'nothing but the bare walls.' The lord chancellor and the master of the court of wards made an arbitration in 1542, but the problems involved were still unsettled in 1559. Even after the death of Rhys Griffith in 1580, Sir Edward Bagnall, who had married one of Edward Griffith's daughters, was still pursuing his wife's claims in the court of wards. (Penrhyn MSS. 50, 2197; *N.L.W. Jnl.*, iii, 40; [Lewis](#), *Early Chancery Procs.*, 21, 22, 288, 290; Lewis and Davies, *Augmentation Recs.*, 51; *L. and P. Henry VIII*, v, no. 724 (10), xv, 433, 661, xvii, 466, xix 812 (16), Addenda, i, part ii, 1462; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edward VI*, iv, 36; *Acts Privy Council, 1580-1*, 289; P.R.O., Court of Requests Procs., bundle iv, no. 258; bundle vi, no 210.)

Poems by [William Cynwal](#) and [Siôn Brwynog](#) refer to the prowess of Rhys Griffith (died 1580) in the Irish wars, while [Siôn](#)

[Tudur](#) implies that he had spent much of his earlier life in London. (Mostyn MSS. 1, 159; *Llên Cymru*, ii, 88-9.) He married (1) c. 1526, Margaret, daughter of [Morris ap John of Clennau](#); by this marriage there were five sons and two daughters. (2) c. 1551, Jane, daughter of [Dafydd ap William ap Griffith of Cochwillan](#). (3) c. 1566, Catherine, daughter of [Piers Mostyn of Talacre](#); by this marriage there were two sons, [Piers](#) and William ([Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 185 is inaccurate on these marriages; for the second marriage, see Penrhyn MSS. 58-61.) He was knighted at the coronation of Edward VI (1547) and on the accession of Mary was recommended by Nicholas Heath, archbishop of York and president of Wales, as a suitable member of parliament for Caernarvonshire. He was not elected, but was Member of Parliament for the borough of Caernarvon in 1555 and high sheriff of Caernarvonshire in 1566-7. (*Cal. Wynn Papers*, 19; [Williams](#), *The Parliamentary History of the Principality of Wales, 1541-1895* , 65; [Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 52.) He died 30 July 1580 (Penrhyn MSS: 78-82) and was succeeded by [Pirs Griffith](#), his eldest son by the third marriage. During his lifetime the estate passed by purchase into the possession of [John Williams \(1582 - 1650\)](#) of the kindred house of [Williams of Cochwillan](#).

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Sources

The sources have been indicated in the article

Darllen Pellach

A.D. Carr, [Gwilym ap Gruffydd and the rise of the Penrhyn estate](#), *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 15, no 1, June 1990

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