


WILLIAMS family, of Cochwillan.

Descended from the same stock as [Griffith of Penrhyn](#), the founder of the family was

ROBIN AP GRIFFITH (died c.1445)

Brother of the [Gwilym ap Griffith](#) who established the Penrhyn fortunes on a firm foundation. Robin may have been settled in Bodfeio as early as 1389. He married (1) Angharad, daughter of Rhys ap Griffith and (2) Lowry, daughter of Grono ap Ifan. He supported [Owain Glyndwr](#) in the early stages of his rising, but had abandoned his cause by 1408, when he appears as a crown official in Caernarvonshire. He was alive in 1443 and probably died c. 1445 (J. R. Jones, 'The development of the Penrhyn estate to 1431'; University of Wales, M.A. thesis, unpublished; Min. Acc., 1153/5; [Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 186).

GRIFFITH AP ROBIN (died c. 1475), royal official and crown farmer

Son of Robin ap Griffith by his first marriage. He married Maltt daughter of [Griffith Derwas ap Meurig of Nannau](#). His half-brother, Thomas, was executed as a Lancastrian at Conway in 1468 by [William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke of the Herbert line](#), but Griffith seems to have imitated the pliancy of his [Griffith kinsmen at Penrhyn](#); he appears regularly as a royal official and crown farmer in Caernarvonshire from 1459 to 1475, and in 1466 he was member of a commission appointed to enquire into reports that various revenues of Caernarfonshire and Anglesey were unpaid since the accession of Edward IV ([The history of the Gwydir family](#) , ed. 1927, 19; Min. Acc., 1180/1-1181/5; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1461-7, 529).

WILLIAM AP GRIFFITH (died c. 1500), soldier and sheriff of Caernarfonshire

Son of Griffith ap Robin. He was a firm supporter of the Tudors. He married Angharad, daughter of [Dafydd ap Ieuan ap Einion](#) the Lancastrian defender of Harlech between c. 1460-8. He is said to have brought a troop of horse to support [Henry of Richmond](#) at Bosworth, was appointed sheriff for life of Caernarvonshire in 1485, received letters of denization in 1486 and probably died 1500 ([Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 50; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1485-94, 55). His son,

WILLIAM WILLIAMS (died c. 1559), commissioner and sheriff of Caernarfonshire

Son of William ap Griffith, and the first of the family to adopt the surname Williams. He married Lowry, daughter of [Henry Salesbury of Llanrhaeadr](#), and described himself as an old man before 1559. He was one of the commissioners of inquiry for the dioceses of Bangor and S. Asaph appointed in 1535 in pursuance of articles and instructions relating to tenths and spiritualities. He was sheriff of Caernarvonshire in 1542, 1547, and 1553. His will was dated 24 June 1558 and proved 3 June 1559. (His third son, Thomas, founded the family of Williams of Faenol, see [Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 190).

WILLIAM (WYNN) WILLIAMS (died 1557)

Eldest son of William Williams. He married Dorothy, daughter of [Sir William Griffith](#) of Penrhyn; he appears to have predeceased his father, his will being proved 14 May 1557. It follows that the 'William Williams' elected Member of Parliament for Caernarvonshire in 1558 must have been the father, not the son. Two younger sons of William (Wynn) Williams founded families of some note - ARTHUR, ancestor of the family of Williams of Meillionydd, and EDMUND WILLIAMS of Conway, father of [John Williams](#), archbishop of York (*Cal. Wynn Papers*, 30; Penrhyn MSS. 63; [Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 51; *L. and P. Henry VIII*, viii, no. 149 (66 and 67); [Williams](#), *The parliamentary history of the principality of Wales*, 58; Pen. MSS. 289. The dates given in [Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 186 are inaccurate).

The estate passed to

WILLIAM WILLIAMS (died 1612)

The eldest son of William (Wynn) Williams, who held it until his death in 1612. He married (1) Agnes, daughter of [John ap Meredith](#) of Gwydir, and (2) c. 1569, Barbara, daughter of George Lumley, son of John, lord Lumley, and widow of [Humphrey Llwyd](#), the antiquarian. He was sheriff of Caernarvonshire 1571 and 1592, and of Montgomeryshire 1589 and 1596 ([Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 51 and 53; [Lloyd](#), *Sheriffs of Montgomeryshire*, 232 and 269).

His son by the first marriage, OWEN WILLIAMS, is commonly said to have been disinherited in favour of HENRY WILLIAMS, his son by the second marriage; the real facts are not so simple. At a date unknown, William Williams had granted his estate in tail male to Owen Williams, but Owen died before 1590, leaving only a daughter, Dorothy, who married Henry Needham of Thornsett, Derbyshire ([Edwards](#), *Star Chamb. Procs.*, 152 and 155). In 1590 William Williams released his lands in trust for his second wife, Barbara, and their son, Henry Williams; the estates are described as lying in Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Merioneth, Montgomeryshire, Shropshire, and Cheshire (Penrhyn MSS. 77; for his interests in Oswestry see E. G. Jones, *Exchequer Procs.*, 345). This step involved him in litigation with his grand-daughter by his first marriage in the court of Wards (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1603-10*, 642). He was litigious by nature and there can be no doubt that the estate became embarrassed as a result.

He appears to have pursued a life-long feud with his kinsman, [John Wynn of Gwydir](#) (see [Wynn of Gwydir](#)). In 1592 the quarrel reached a climax when Williams accused [Wynn](#) in Star Chamber of striking him at a meeting of magistrates in

Conway church, an offence for which [Wynn](#) was fined (*Cal. Wynn Papers*, 114, 132, 134, 727; *Clenennau L. and P.*, 45, 46, 48; [Edwards](#), *Star Chamb. Procs.*, 37, 38; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1603-10*, 456). He prosecuted Star Chamber cases against [Sir Richard Bulkeley](#) of Beaumaris and against various individuals in Caernarvonshire and Montgomeryshire ([Edwards](#), *Star Chamb. Procs.*, 37, 38; E. G. Jones, *Exchequer Procs.*, 345).

He was also at feud with kinsman, [Sir Rhys Griffith](#) of Penrhyn and his son, [Pirs Griffith](#) (Penrhyn MSS. 239-41, 245-7, 249).

He was one of many Welsh squires who borrowed from [Sir Thomas Myddelton](#), and he was mortgaging land in 1612. He was outlawed, probably for debt, and his goods and chattels were granted to Dr. John Craig, the king's physician, who later compounded with the heir, Henry Williams. He died February 1612 (article [Myddelton](#); *Jnl. N.L.W.*, i, 85; Penrhyn MSS. 276; [T. I. Jones](#), *Exchequer Procs.*, *James I*, 51-3; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1611-18*, 132).

HENRY WILLIAMS (born c. 1570)

Son of William Williams (died 1612). He married Jane, daughter of Thomas Salusbury of Denbigh, third son of [Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni](#). He was, apparently, involved in his father's quarrels from an early age; in 1587 he was accused at the Great Sessions for Caernarvonshire of riot and forcible entry into lands in tenure of [Pirs Griffith](#) of Penrhyn. Immediately after his father's death in February 1612, he undertook to sell Cochwillan and lands in Caernarvonshire for £1,000 to [Sir William Herbert of Montgomeryshire](#) in order to defray his debts; the sale appears to have been frustrated by Henry Needham, acting for his son by Dorothy Williams, who refused to surrender his wife's claim to a share in the estate. Henry Williams was mortgaging lands in Creuddyn in 1613, and a series of complicated lawsuits with Henry Needham further taxed his resources; he was, apparently, under arrest for debt between 1616 and 1618.

By a process which is obscure, Cochwillan and the Caernarvonshire property was purchased c. 1620 by Henry Williams's cousin, [John Williams](#) (1582 - 1650) who acquired the Penrhyn estate about the same time; but as late as 1674, John Williams of Ystumcolwyn, Montgomeryshire, grandson of Henry Williams, sold a tenement in Bodfeio to Sir Robert Williams of Penrhyn - probably the last remnant of the estate (Penrhyn MSS. 101, 244, 274-6, 460; *Cal. Wynn Papers*, 988; [Edwards](#), *Star Chamb. Procs.*, 152, 155, 156; Smith, *Cal. Salusbury Corr.*, 217; [T. I. Jones](#), *Exchequer Procs.*, *James I*, 279; [Griffith](#), *Pedigrees*, 186).

GRIFFITH WILLIAMS (bu farw 1663), deputy vice-admiral of North Wales and sheriff of Caernarfonshire

On the death of [archbishop John Williams](#) in 1650, the joint estates passed to his nephew, Griffith Williams (died 1663), son of Robert Williams of Conway (died before 1613; see Penrhyn MSS. no. 420; for difficulties relating to his inheritance see *Cal. Wyn Papers*, nos. 1943-6, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2017-9, 2025-6). He was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, February 1624. He married Gwen, daughter of [Hugh \(Gwyn\) Bodwrda](#), an alliance which was strengthened to the next generation by the marriage of their daughter, Catherine, to her cousin, [John](#), grandson of [Hugh Gwyn Bodwrda](#). In 1641, as deputy vice-admiral of North Wales, he reported a suspected plot by the recusants of Creuddyn to seize Conway. During the Civil War and Commonwealth period he followed, in general, the lead given by his uncle. He was sheriff of Caernarvonshire in 1651 and 1662. He was created baronet by Cromwell in 1658 and by Charles II in 1661. He died in 1663 ([Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 55, 56; articles [Bodwrda](#), and [Puw family of Penrhyn Creuddyn](#); *Cal. Wynn Papers*, no. 1695; G.E.C., *Complete Baronetage*, iii, 6, 212).

Sir ROBERT WILLIAMS 2nd bart. (c. 1627 - 1680), M.P.

Son of Griffith Williams (died 1663). He married (1) in 1652, Jane, daughter of [Sir John Glynne of Hawarden](#) (see [Glynne of Hawarden](#)). This influential marriage reflected and fostered his political views. With his father-in-law he was elected Member of Parliament for Caernarvonshire in 1656 and in 1658 he was returned for Caernarvon. He was sheriff for Caernarvonshire in 1670. He married (2) in 1671, Frances, widow of colonel Whyte of Friars (Beaumaris), daughter of Sir Edward Barkham, bart. (*Cal. Wynn Papers*, nos. 1982, 2121; Penrhyn MSS. no. 430; [Williams](#), *The parliamentary history of the principality of Wales*, 61; G.E.C., *Complete Baronetage*, iii, 213; [Breeze](#), *Kalendars*, 56).

He was followed by his two sons. Sir JOHN WILLIAMS (died 1682), 3rd bart., and Sir GRIFFITH WILLIAMS (died 1684), 4th bart., who died without heirs. The baronetcy passed to [Hugh Williams of Marl](#), third son of [Sir Griffith Williams, 1st baronet](#).

Penrhyn and Cochwillan went to Frances, eldest daughter of Sir Robert Williams who, in turn, left them jointly to her two sisters - (1) Anne, who married Thomas Warburton of Winnington, Ches., and (2) Gwen, who married Sir Walter Yonge of Escot, Devon.

Between 1765 and 1785 [Richard Pennant](#) succeeded, through marriage and purchase, in reuniting the moieties of the estate (see article [Pennant of Penrhyn](#)).

Author

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Sources

Sources indicated in the article

Further reading

[Cochwillan](#), Hanes Dyffryn Ogwen website, (accessed 8 January 2020)

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