

WILLIAMS families, of Gwernyfed, in the parish of Glasbury, Brecknock

There were two Williams families at that place:

(1) The name is first linked with Gwernyfed in the person of Sir DAVID WILLIAMS (1536? - 1613), judge, the youngest son of Gwilym ap John Vychan, of Blaen Newydd (= Blaen Nedd ?), Ystradfellte, who was the cousin of [Sir John Price](#) of Brecon. David Williams was called to the Bar from the Middle Temple in 1576. His career, which is given in the *D.N.B.*, was a highly successful one. He became attorney-general for five of the South Wales counties in the Great Sessions (1581-5), recorder of Brecon (1587-1604) and of Carmarthen, Member of Parliament for Brecon (1584-93 and 1597-1604); he was appointed a sergeant-at-law in 1593, knighted by James I, and raised to the King's Bench. He died 22 January 1612/13, and was buried in the Priory church at Brecon (see his epitaph in [Theophilus Jones](#), 3rd ed., ii, 68). In 1600 he bought the Gwernyfed estate from John Gunter, the last of the old proprietors; and he also had other estates (and tithes) in Brecknock and other border counties.

The account of the descendants of Sir David Williams given by [Theophilus Jones](#) (op. cit., iii, 82-3), Burke (*Extinct Baronetcies*, 568), and [Jane Williams](#) in her article on Glasbury (*Archæologia Cambrensis*, 1870, 308-9) is misleading - e.g. two generations have been mixed up, as is proved by R. W. Banks (*Archæologia Cambrensis*, 1879, 308-9, or [Theophilus Jones](#), 3rd ed., iii, 91-2). Sir David was succeeded by his son Sir HENRY WILLIAMS, who died 1636. It was probably he (and not his son of the same name, as given in the list of Members of Parliament at the end of *History of the County of Brecknock*) who was the member for the borough of Brecon 1601-4; he was knighted in 1603 and became a member of the Council of the Marches in 1617; again, it was probably he who was member for the county of Brecknock from 1620 to 1628. On the other hand, as the Member of Parliament for that county in 1628-9 is referred to as 'Henry Williams Esq.', it seems likely that this was the son - Sir HENRY WILLIAMS (died 1652), who was created a baronet in 1644, and who welcomed Charles I to Gwernyfed when the latter visited Wales after the battle of Naseby (1645). As none of his male descendants merit attention here, it is unnecessary to trace the lineage further; Burke claims that the baronetcy continued until 1798, but Banks quotes contemporary evidence to show that it had lapsed before 1727, and this is far more credible, for two brothers died without male issue, leaving their sister, ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, as sole heiress. With her marriage Gwernyfed passed to a new line of the Williams family.

(2) We must now turn to the Williams family of 'Tallyn' in the parish of Llangasty Tal-y-llyn (see [W. R. Williams, Old Wales](#), iii, 195-205, and [Theophilus Jones](#), iii, 84). This family was founded by one THOMAS WILLIAMS, who married a daughter of the old Powell family of 'Tallyn.' He had a son, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, whose youngest son was Sir THOMAS WILLIAMS (1604 - 1712) 'of Eltham,' a doctor who became physician to Charles II and later to James II. Charles's method of paying his doctor's bill was by heaping profitable sinecures on him - Assay-Master of the Mint, Examiner in Bankruptcy, Receiver-General of Land Revenues, etc.; all of which brought great wealth to Williams. He was created a baronet in 1674. He died in 1712 at the age of 108, and was buried 20 September 1712 at Glasbury. His two sons, Sir JOHN WILLIAMS (2nd baronet; died 1723) and Sir EDWARD WILLIAMS (died 1721) had already been knighted. Sir Edward had married (before 1712, otherwise his father would not have been buried at Glasbury) Elizabeth Williams (see under (1)), through whom he gained possession of Gwernyfed. He was Member of Parliament for Brecknock, 1697-8, and 1705-21; he was buried at Glasbury, 28 July 1721. One of Sir Edward's sons succeeded to Sir John's baronetcy; but a series of unexpected deaths followed, and the baronetcy came to an end when the 5th baronet, Sir EDWARD WILLIAMS died at Clifton in 1804 without a surviving son. This Sir Edward deserves mention because he was one of the principal promoters of the Brecknock Agricultural Society (1755 - the first in Wales) - see [Theophilus Jones](#), ii, 34-7; [W. R. Williams, Old Wales](#), ii, passim; [M. H. Jones](#) in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1908-9. This brought him into close contact with [Howel Harris](#), and it was through his influence that [Harris](#) obtained a captaincy in the Brecknock militia; some of the correspondence between the two is preserved in the Trevecka collection. As his only son, Edward, had predeceased him, Gwernyfed was inherited by his daughter, MARY WILLIAMS. She married Thomas Wood of Middlesex; their son, THOMAS WOOD (1777 - 1860), was Member of Parliament for Brecknock from 1806 to 1847 without a break, thus overthrowing the political influence of the [Morgans of Tredegar](#) in the county.

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