

WILLIAMS family, of Marl, near Conway

A branch of the **Cochwillan family** (**J. E. Griffith**, *Pedigrees*, 186-7) and so of the **Penrhyn family**. The surname 'Williams' was adopted by **William ap William ap Gruffydd** of Cochwillan whose will was proved in 1559; the wills of his son and grandson (of the same name) were proved in 1610 and 1622 respectively. The last of these disinherited his heir, and the estate passed to a younger son, **EDMUND WILLIAMS** of Conway (died early in 1601) - and that was the beginning of the family which came to be known as 'Williams of Marl.' **ROBERT WILLIAMS**, of Pen'rallt, Conway, and **archbishop John Williams** (1582 - 1650) were Edmund's sons. Robert Williams had a son, Sir **GRIFFITH WILLIAMS**, who died in 1663; he inherited his uncle the archbishop's estate, and was created a baronet in 1661. His son, the 2nd baronet, Sir **ROBERT WILLIAMS**, was the owner of Penrhyn and Cochwillan, but his two sons (the 3rd and 4th baronets) died young; the Penrhyn and Cochwillan lands were inherited by their sisters, but the title passed to their uncle, Sir **HUGH WILLIAMS** (1628 - 1686), the 5th baronet, whose property near Conway may be regarded as the nucleus of the Marl estate; indeed, he built the Marl mansion. His wife was Anne Vaughan of Pant Glas, Ysbyty Ifan (see under **Vaughan** of Pant Glas family), and their marriage united the estates of Marl and Pant Glas. Their son was Sir **GRIFFITH WILLIAMS** (died in 1734), the 6th baronet; he married **Catherine Anwyl** of the Park (Llanfrothen) and Llwyn (Dolgelley) - see the article on the **Anwyls** - but, as the estates of that family were encumbered it is doubtful whether this was altogether to the advantage of Marl. Only two of the children of this marriage came of age. Sir **ROBERT WILLIAMS**, the 7th baronet, died unmarried in 1745, and the baronetcy passed to his kinsmen, the Williams-Bulkeley family (**J. E. Griffith**, op. cit., 43), but his property was inherited by his sister **ANNE WILLIAMS** (afterwards **PRENDERGAST**), the date of whose birth is unknown. She acquired a dubious reputation. She was esteemed the wealthiest heiress in North Wales; whether this was true or not (bearing in mind the indebtedness of the Park estates), she was undoubtedly extremely extravagant. She was, for a time, one of queen Caroline's ladies-in-waiting, and there is a strong tradition (unproved, however) that she was the duke of Cumberland's mistress and had a son by him who was brought up by her under the name of 'William Roberts.' Mistress or not, the Conway parish register, under the date 10 June 1742, testifies that William Roberts was the son of Sir Robert Williams 'by his mistress Margaret Roberts.' In 1739 Anne married Sir Thomas Prendergast, an Irishman; the marriage was an unhappy one, and part of the property had to be sold, tradition says because of Anne's wastefulness. Sir Thomas died in September 1760, and early in 1761 Anne married his cousin, Terence Prendergast. This marriage, too, ended disastrously; Park and Llwyn were sold, and Anne, accompanied by William Roberts, went to live at Pant Glas, her grandmother's old home, leaving Marl to her husband. She died in poverty, 15 December 1770, at Nant Gwilym, Bodfari, and was buried in Llan-rhos church. William Roberts was involved in lengthy litigation with the Prendergasts; he was twice married and had many children; he held a commission in the Royal Navy; and died suddenly in London in 1791. He had, some time before 1774, sold the Pant Glas estate to the Lloyds of Penbryn (i.e. the **Mostyn** family). They pulled down part of the mansion, and used the materials for the building of Plas Glasgwm, Penmachno; the rest of the old house crashed down one stormy night in 1790 or thereabouts. Terence Prendergast died in 1776, leaving the remnants of the estate to his brother Jeffrey Prendergast; the latter emigrated to the U.S.A., and the estate was bought by **Thomas Williams** of Llanidan (1737 - 1802), and, later on, by the **Mostyns**. About the middle of the 19th century the latter sold it to **Pennant** of Penrhyn - and now it belongs to the National Trust.

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Sources

J. E. Griffith (as above)

Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions, 1949, 26-9, and the references therein

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