

Milling Families of Anglesey

Following Four Dynasties of Millers Through the Decades

WARREN KOVACH

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*Melinydd oedd fy nhaid, melinydd oedd fy nhad. Melinydd ydwyf finnau, y gorau yn y wlad.
Melinydd fydd y baban pan ddelo fo i'r byd. Ond ydyw yn beth rhyfedd bod ni'n felinyddion i gyd!*

My grandfather was a miller, my father was a miller. I also am a miller, the best in the land.
The baby will be a miller when he comes into the world. But it's a strange thing that we are all millers!

Melinydd Oedd Fy Nhad – Traditional Welsh folk song¹

Anglesey is known as *Môn Mam Cymru*, the mother of Wales, because its fertile fields made it the breadbasket of North Wales. As a result, the island had numerous mills for grinding the grain. These include tidal mills in the Menai and Cymyran Straits, 48 windmills built in the 18th and 19th centuries, and more than 50 watermills. These have attracted scholarly interest, from a short section in the Royal Commission's *Inventory of Anglesey*² and R.O. Roberts paper in these Transactions in 1958³ to the two editions (1992 and 2010) of Barry Guise and George Lees *Windmills of Anglesey* book⁴ and J. Richard Williams' *Melinau Môn*.⁵ The Welsh Mills Society's journal *Melin* also has numerous articles about Anglesey mills.

These works primarily focus on the construction, structure, operation, demise and conversion of the mills, but also discuss the owners and primary millers, with Guise and Lees in particular giving some character to the millers through historical accounts and interviews with their descendants. They also note cases where mills have passed down from father to son and to other relatives, or where particular millers founded a dynasty of sons who went on to work other mills. The Rowlands brothers in particular are named, seven siblings who grew up at Melin Drylliau and ran mills around the island. But they are mentioned just in passing, rather than the whole story of the family being told. The desire to build up a better picture of the Rowlands family, to follow their journey around the mills of Anglesey, has led to the research presented here.

The advent of indexed and easily searchable online databases of the Wales censuses, electoral registrations, Anglesey parish records (digitised from the Anglesey Archives collection WPE/1-80), probate indices, newspapers and other sources has made it much easier to trace people, and their occupations, through time. The research here relies heavily on these sources, primarily accessed through the Ancestry.co.uk and Britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk web sites.

Milling on Anglesey

Milling has been an important occupation on Anglesey for centuries. The 1352 Extent of Anglesey lists 17 royal mills, two to three in each commote, plus at least 45 private mills. Most were probably water mills,

¹ Emma Lile, 'Mills in Song'. *Melin* 15 (1999), pp. 3-15.

² Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions in Wales and Monmouthshire, *An inventory of the ancient monuments in Anglesey*. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), pp. clxiii-clxviii.

³ R.O. Roberts, 'The mills of Anglesey'. *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1958), pp. 1-15.

⁴ Barry Guise & George Lees, *Windmills of Anglesey*, second edition. (Lancaster: Scotforth Books, 2010).

⁵ J. Richard Williams, *Melinau Môn*. (Llanrwst: Carreg Gwalch, 2009).

but at least two, built in Newborough and Beaumaris in the 14th century, were known to be windmills.⁶ There is a mention in the 1512 Plea Rolls of Anglesey of “one horse mill”, so it is possible that others were also animal driven.⁷ There were also at least five tidal mills, four on the Cymyran Strait between Holy Island/Ynys Gybi and the main part of Anglesey, and one on the Menai Strait near Church Island/Ynys Tysilio. These were all first recorded in the 16th century with some operating until the late 19th century.⁸



The windmills and watermills mentioned in this article.

The 18th and early 19th centuries saw the increase in Anglesey's population, and thus the need for more grain. The low-lying terrain of Anglesey meant that sources of sufficient waterpower for mills were limited, which was exacerbated by frequent dry spells from the 1740s. So, this period saw the increasing use of another type of energy plentiful on Anglesey: wind power. Starting from around 1735 a number of tower windmills were built on Anglesey. By 1835 there were over 40 windmills scattered around the island. But, by the mid-19th century a number of factors began to conspire to reduce the demand for local milling of grain.^{9,10}

The opening of the railway to Anglesey over the Britannia Bridge in 1850 reduced transport costs, which, along with the increasing demand for meat in the growing cities and the emigration of many farm labourers to more lucrative industrial jobs in England, encouraged many farmers to switch from grain to grazing. Grain prices also fell after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the increasing import of cheaper foreign grain. By the end of the century the introduction of steam-powered roller mills (one in Holyhead and others further afield in places like Liverpool) further ate into the trade of the traditional tower mill, and they slowly began to close. Some, like Stanley windmill (Melin y Gof) near Trearddur and Dulas watermill, struggled through to the 1930s but eventually closed when they were damaged and repairs were no longer economic.¹¹ Melin Hywel (also called Howell and Selar) in Llanddeusant continued working until the 1990s. Its machinery is still intact and the family that own it are currently working on its restoration to working order as a tourist attraction, alongside the nearby Melin Llynon windmill, restored by Anglesey Council in the 1980s.¹²

⁶ A.D. Carr, 2011. *Medieval Anglesey*. (Llangefni: The Anglesey Antiquarian Society & Field Club), p. 83-84.

⁷ R.O. Roberts, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸ Lucy Williams, 'Anglesey Tide Mills'. *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1945), pp. 61-63.

⁹ R.O. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 7-8. 14-15.

¹⁰ Guise & Lees, op. cit. pp. 3,9-13.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *The Daily Post*, 29 May 2022

The numbers of millers recorded in the censuses reflect the trends in milling discussed above. In 1841 111 people recorded their occupation as miller. In 1851 it peaked at 145. Numbers dropped after this: 92 in 1861, 44 in 1881 and 42 in 1891.¹³ Data are not available for 1871 or 1901, but by 1911 numbers had dropped to 26, then around 20 in 1921. By 1939 there were just nine millers on the island.¹⁴

The state of Anglesey's windmills was reviewed by the renowned windmill expert Rex Wailes in 1929. Wailes was an engineer, author of the classic book *The English Windmill*, and advocate of the preservation of windmills. On Maundy Thursday in 1929 he headed off from his home near London in his Morris Cowley saloon car, arriving on Anglesey the next day for a three-day whirlwind tour. His clockwise route around the island took him to 35 of the 39 windmills still in existence at the time. Of these 25 were roofless shells and one (Melin Frogwy near Bodffordd) had been converted to a house. Of the rest three were still working (Melin Uchaf and Melin y Bont near Llanfaelog, and Stanley Mill by Trearddur), and five still had their machinery intact.^{15,16} Unfortunately, no similar survey was done at the time of watermills.

In 1943 another survey of mills on Anglesey was done as part of a report for the Rural Industries Bureau by T.O. Williams, focusing on employment opportunities in the countryside. He identified 15 wind and watermills with their equipment still in situ, five of which were still actively grinding grain (three by water power, two by diesel). Most of the others mentioned could be brought back into action with repairs, and Williams does note that there is still demand in the area for grinding of grain, particularly for animal feed. However, their restoration was unlikely for most of them for reasons as varied as the cost of repairs, ill health of the occupant and former miller, lack of interest by the new occupiers, and disputes about ownership.¹⁷

In the 1950s the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) compiled a list of wind and water mills on Anglesey, apparently with a view at assessing which were worth preserving. Thirty windmills are listed, most of which are described as in poor states of repair or being used for storage. The 20 water mills listed are generally in better shape, many of which still had their water wheels and machinery intact; two were milling on the day of inspection.¹⁸

Since the 1950s great strides have taken place in preserving and restoring these historic buildings. Today, of the 32 windmills with some evidence of the structure remaining, 14 have been converted to dwellings, one into a mobile phone mast, and one fully restored to working order.¹⁹ John Crompton's recent papers on the watermills of Anglesey²⁰ provide the results of a survey he did in the 1970s along with a more comprehensive one in the 2000s. In the 1970s 27 mills were listed. Only one was still working and four had most of the machinery in place but were not being used. His more recent survey in 2008 highlighted 51 watermills, none of which were working and only three contained the full milling equipment. Twelve had been converted to dwellings.

Melin y Borth, Amlwch

First, before delving into the families, a cautionary tale. As anyone who researches people in Wales will know, a small number of common names are widely used, and differentiating individuals can be difficult. At Melin y Borth (also called Mona Mill) at Amlwch Port, Guise & Lees noted that a William Jones was listed as a corn merchant and miller in the 1850 Slater's directory. Later directories up to 1895 also list

¹³ D. Alan Gatley, M. Woollard, E. Garrett, P. Garret, H. R. Southall, D. Doring, C. Lee, A. Reid (2022). Great Britain Historical Database : Census Data : Occupational Statistics, 1841-1991. [data collection]. 2nd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 4559, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-4559-2.

¹⁴ Searches of census and 1939 Register databases on ancestry.co.uk and findmypast.co.uk.

¹⁵ John Crompton. Rex Wailes in Anglesey. *Melin* 26 (2010), pp.18-49

¹⁶ Rex Wailes. *Article on Anglesey Windmills*. The Mills Archive, GB 3132 SPAB-WIS-ANGL-01.

¹⁷ John Crompton. Anglesey Mills in 1943. *Melin* 28 (2012), pp. 31-45.

¹⁸ *Preservation of Wind and Water Mills – Anglesey*. The Mills Archive, GB 3132 SPAB-WIS-ANGL-21.

¹⁹ Warren Kovach. Windmill section of the Anglesey History website. <https://www.anglesey-history.co.uk/windmills>

²⁰ John Crompton. Anglesey watermills, then and now: Part 1. *Melin* 22 (2006), pp. 27-52. & Anglesey watermills, then and now: Part 2. *Melin* 24 (2008), pp. 3-46.

William Jones as miller and corn merchant, and they assumed that it was the same person.²¹ However, closer look at the censuses tells a different story.

The 1851 census shows a William Jones, corn merchant, living on Queen Street (the same address as given in Slater's the previous year). He was born around 1806 in Coedana and was married to Jane. A Robert Jones, miller, was living nearer to the mill at Pen y Borth; he may have been responsible for the day-to-day running of the mill, and he was also there in the 1861 census.²²

William Jones, miller, appears in the 1871 census living on Turkey Shore Road (on the west side of the harbour, just below the mill). However, this one was born around 1825 in Ceidio, so clearly not the same person. He was widowed but had several children aged seven to 21, many involved in the milling. Looking for this William Jones and his children in previous censuses reveals that in 1861 he was the miller at Melin Manaw, a now ruined windmill near Bodffordd. His wife Mary was still alive at this time. Going further back to 1851, he was a miller living at Tynewydd, Llechylched, with his wife Mary and eldest daughter Elizabeth.²³ He was most likely working at the nearby Melin Treban watermill. William probably took over the mill in Amlwch in 1863, as it was advertised for let at that time by the owner J.W. Paynter.²⁴ The advertisement boasts that the mill contained seven pairs of stones as well as a 20-horsepower steam engine, for when the winds were low.

In 1881 a William Jones, miller, was again living at Turkey Shore Road. But this one was born in 1831 in Amlwch and is the third William Jones. William Jones from Ceidio had by this time moved across town to Pentrefelin to be the miller at Melin Adda, assisted again by his sons Owen and Lewis. The third William Jones, and his wife Ann, also appear in the 1891 census at Mona Mill house, where he was also living when listed as the miller in the 1895 Slater's directory.^{25,26}

Sadly, tragedy struck for the second William Jones as his 18-year-old son William was killed by lightning while working at the mill in 1876.²⁷ But the third William Jones had the pride of his daughter Catherine winning a prize for the Sunday School exams.²⁸

The Rowlands Brothers

Melin Drylliau, near Rhydwyn, overlooks Porth Swtan (Church Bay) on the west coast of Anglesey. It was probably built in the early 19th century and, because of its proximity to the coast, was marked on sea charts as a navigational aid. This unassuming mill, now an empty but full height tower (with planning permission for conversion to a house²⁹), was the home of a dynasty of millers who ran mills across Anglesey.

William Rowlands was born around 1813 in Llantrisant, Anglesey. By 1840 the tithe apportionment books show he was occupier of Caerau farm and Melin Drylliau. His wife came from a milling dynasty. She was Elizabeth Williams, daughter of Rowland Williams of Selar watermill,³⁰ whose family ran that mill for generations. They had nine children, all but one surviving until adulthood.³¹ Their only daughter, Mary, lived at Caerau all her life until her death, unmarried, at age 41 in 1884.³² The seven brothers all went on to be involved in running mills for at least part of their lives.

²¹ Guise & Lees, op. cit. p. 68.

²² Wales Censuses – 1851, Amlwch, enumeration district [ED] 3C, page [p] 24, household number [HN] 99. 1851, Amlwch, ED 3A, p 291, HN 114. 1861, Amlwch, ED 2E, p 15, HN 92.

²³ Wales Censuses – 1871, Amlwch, ED 1, p 23, HN 147. 1861, Llandrygarn, ED 11, p 4, HN 21. 1851, Llechylched, ED 3b, p 21, HN 64.

²⁴ *The North Wales Chronicle*, 3 January 1863, p. 1.

²⁵ Wales Censuses – 1881, Amlwch, ED 1, p 24, HN 14. 1881, Amlwch, ED 5, p 17, HN 98. 1891, Amlwch, ED 1, p 13, HN 100.

²⁶ *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales*, 1895, p 51.

²⁷ *The Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald*, 14 October 1876, p. 4.

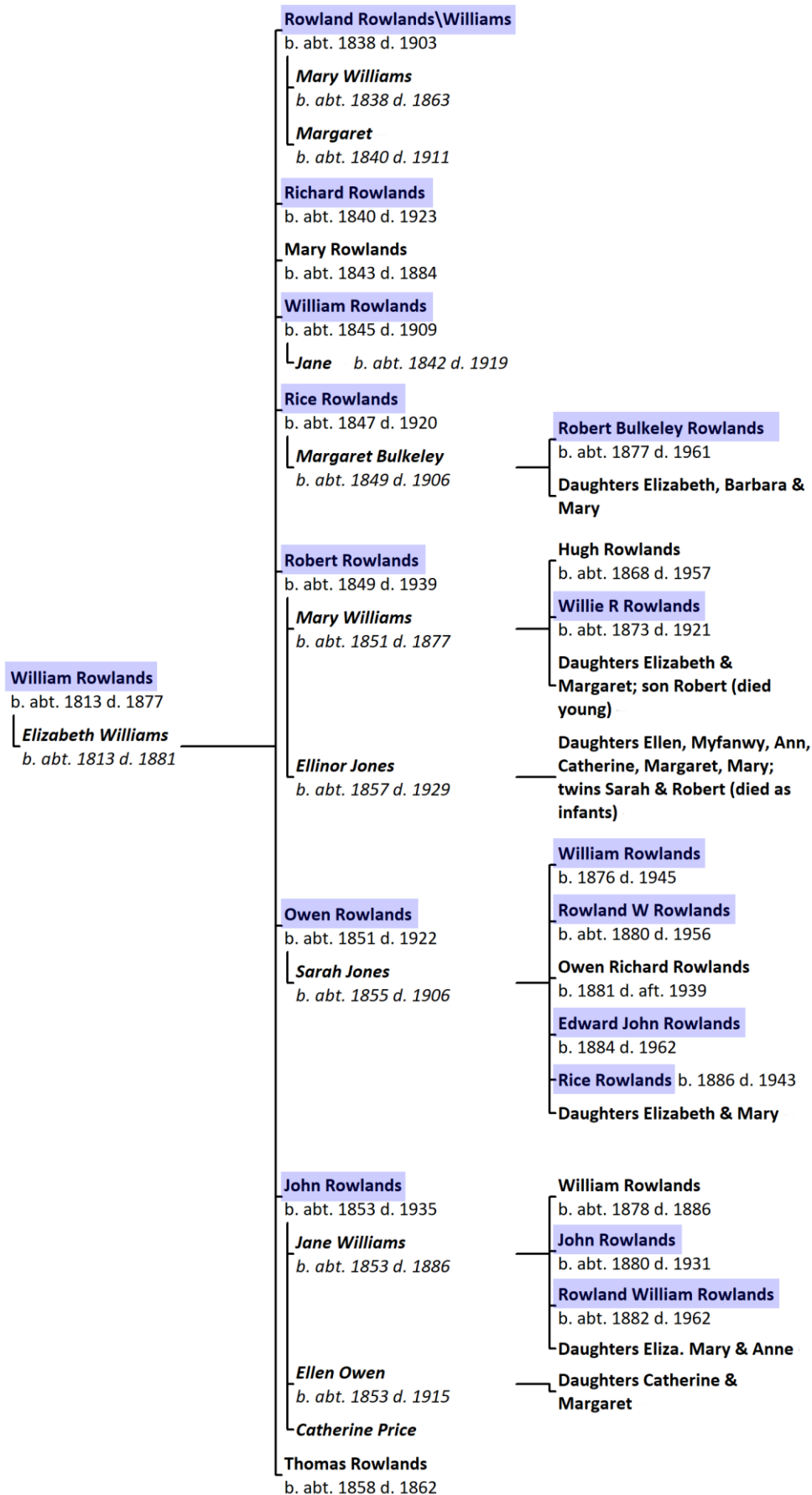
²⁸ *The North Wales Chronicle*, 5 January 1895, p. 6.

²⁹ Planning Application LBC/2019/34, Isle of Anglesey County Council.

³⁰ Anglesey Archives, WSM303/10.

³¹ Wales Censuses – 1851, Llanrhyddlad, ED 7a, p 21, HN 88. 1861, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13d, p 14, HN 73. 1871, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 4, HN 21. 1881, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 13, HN 62.

³² Gravestone, Baptist Churchyard, Rhydwyn



The Rowlands family of Melin Caerau

Those who were millers at least part of their lives are marked blue

Rowland Rowlands / Williams

The eldest, Rowland, was born in 1838 in Llantrisant, before the family moved to Caerau. By the time he was 20 he had decided to adopt a patronymic name and was known as Rowland Williams for the rest of his life. He married Mary Williams at this time³³ and continued living at Caerau, helping on the farm and mill. She died young around 1863 and he subsequently married Margaret. By 1871 he had moved on to run his own mill in Gaerwen, Melin Maengwyn (the easternmost of the three windmills near there), assisted by his younger brother Owen.³⁴ He ran the Gaerwen mill until January 1890 when he handed it over to Hugh Williams. Unfortunately, a couple of months later the two got into a dispute over payment for hay that had been growing on the property, and in the ensuing argument Hugh assaulted Rowland, injuring him enough that Rowland had to go to the doctor. He later sued Hugh for £45 compensation but was awarded just £5.³⁵

Rowland moved to Llanfairpwll to set up business working solely as a corn and flour merchant. He was the only corn merchant listed in the town in the 1895 Slater's directory,³⁶ and was based in Alma Terrace, near the junction of the Holyhead and Penmynydd roads.³⁷ He died in 1903, childless, and was buried at the Pont yr Arw Baptist Chapel in Llanfachraeth, along with Margaret, who died in 1911.³⁸

Richard Rowlands

The second son Richard was also born in Llantrisant in 1840, just before the move to Caerau. He remained unmarried all his life and assisted his father with running the farm. After his father's death in 1877³⁹ he and his sister Mary ran the farm. By this time the mill was called Caerau Mill, and in 1879 the freehold of the farm and mill was put up for auction, with the notice stating that they were in the occupation of Richard Rowlands.⁴⁰ Richard continued living there after the sale and the death of his sister in 1884, until at least 1891. By 1901 the farm was occupied by William Owen and family.⁴¹ Richard wound up in the Holyhead Workhouse where he died in 1923.⁴²

William Rowlands

William Rowlands was born about 1845 at Caerau and worked the farm and mill there until his 20s. By 1871 he had taken over Cemaes windmill and was running it with the assistance of two other employees and a domestic servant. He married a local woman named Jane around 1880. Like his older siblings, he had no children, but he and Jane lived together at the mill until at least 1901.⁴³ Sadly, William died in 1909, aged 64, at the North Wales Counties Asylum in Denbigh.⁴⁴ His relatively large estate of £3772 was granted to his widow Jane.⁴⁵ The mill then was taken over by his nephew John Rowlands (son of his brother John, discussed below), who ran it until 1918 when it was bought by John Richard Roberts,

³³ Anglesey Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, Anglesey Archives [ABMB-AA] WPE/11/3, Llanrhyddlad, 1858 marriages.

³⁴ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 24, p 17, HN 77.

³⁵ *Y Genedl Gymreig*, 8 October 1890, p. 6.

³⁶ *Slater's Directory of North and Mid Wales*, 1895, p 320.

³⁷ Wales Censuses – 1891, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, ED 11, p 5, HN 31. 1901, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, ED 9, p 5, HN 36.

³⁸ Gravestone, Pont yr Arw Baptist Chapel, Llanfachraeth

³⁹ General Register Office. England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index [EWCRDI], 1877, Q3, p 225.

⁴⁰ *The North Wales Chronicle*, 22 February 1879, p. 4.

⁴¹ Wales Censuses – 1851, Llanrhyddlad, ED 7a, p 21, HN 88. 1861, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13d, p 14, HN 73. 1871, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 4, HN 21. 1881, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 13, HN 62. 1891, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, p 3, HN 19. 1901, Llanrhyddlad, ED 11, p 3, HN 18.

⁴² Maggie Pennington (great niece), personal communication, and Anglesey Archives, WM/2660-1&2

⁴³ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanfechell, ED 9, p 12, HN 67. 1891, Llanfechell, ED 8, p 12, HN 63. 1901, Llanfechell, ED 5, p 11, HN 63.

⁴⁴ ABMB-AA, WPE/63/25, Llanbadrig, 1909 burials.

⁴⁵ England & Wales, National Probate Calendar [EWNPC], 1909, p. 102

son of well-known millwright Isaac Roberts.⁴⁶ He converted it to be run by a diesel engine, and it continued grinding until 1946.⁴⁷

Rice Rowlands

The fourth son was Rice Rowlands, born around 1847. By the age of 24 he was the miller at the now vanished Caergeiliog windmill.⁴⁸ In 1872 he married Margaret Bulkeley,⁴⁹ who was a granddaughter of Robert Bulkeley of Gronant, in Llanfachraeth. Her mother initially refused them permission to marry, but after their daughter Elizabeth was born she relented.⁵⁰

They settled in Llanfachraeth where he took over the windmill. They originally lived in Mona Terrace in the middle of the village but in 1883 he bought the fine house Machraeth View from Dame Maria Reade, wife of Sir Charles Reade, Carreglwyd.⁵¹ He lived there for the rest of his life, running the mill and his corn merchant business.⁵² Sometime in the 1910s his son Robert Bulkeley Rowlands took over the mill. However, the cap was dislodged in a storm in 1917, stopping it running. It was eventually demolished. Rice Rowlands recognized that wind milling was soon to lose out to big steam powered mills, so he built warehouses near the Stanley Embankment to store imported flour from Liverpool. His son sold the flour merchant business after his father's death in 1920.^{53,54} Robert married late in life, at the age of 51, to his second cousin Jane Ellen Williams, descendant of the Williamses of Selar farm and mill.⁵⁵ He continued farming in Llanfachraeth, at Bryn Aber, and died in 1961.⁵⁶

Robert Rowlands

Robert Rowlands, the fifth son of William and Elizabeth, had a more varied career than his brothers. Born around 1849, he married Mary Williams at the young ages of 17 for him and 15 for her (although they both gave the ages of 19 on their marriage record).⁵⁷ At the time Robert was a joiner, but Mary's mother had run a drapers' and grocers' shop in Rhydwyn at Bryn Llywelyn, and Robert and Mary took that over. They later moved the business to Berlin House in the centre of the village.⁵⁸

Mary died in 1877 after 11 years of marriage and three children, aged only 26.⁵⁹ A year later he married Ellin Jones from Llanfflewyn,⁶⁰ who had grown up on her grandparents' farm. She and Robert ran the shop for the next several years, but by 1888 they had taken over the farm in Llanfflewyn, with Robert also working as a joiner. They may have lived in Llanddeusant for a period in the early 1880s, as their two oldest daughters were born there. In 1892 they returned there as Robert had another change of career and took over the running of Melin Llynon windmill.^{61,62}

Robert ran the mill until 1918 when a storm damaged the cap. This left it unable to turn, so that grinding could only take place when the wind was from the southwest. The mill was closed sometime after 1921, but Robert continued farming there for many years as well as running a flour distributor business, selling flour shipped to the warehouses by the Stanley Embankment. He eventually retired to a

⁴⁶ Guise & Lees, op. cit. p. 92.

⁴⁷ John Crompton. Anglesey Mills in 1943. *Melin*, 28 (2012), p. 36.

⁴⁸ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanfairyneubwll, ED 9, p 12, HN 62.

⁴⁹ ABMB-AA, WPE/1/23, Llanfachraeth, 1872 marriages.

⁵⁰ Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales: Dating Old Welsh Houses: North West Wales Dendrochronology Project. *Anglesey, Gronant*, p. 13.

⁵¹ National Library of Wales, GB 0210 NLWDEEDS, Series D, File 1952.

⁵² Wales Censuses – 1881, Llanfachraeth, ED 7, p 19, HN 104. 1891, Llanfachraeth, ED 6, p 2, HN 8. 1901, Llanfachraeth, ED 5, p 1, HN 6. 1911, Llanfachraeth, ED 6, HN 22.

⁵³ Guise & Lees, op. cit. p. 35.

⁵⁴ EWNPC, 1920, p. 139.

⁵⁵ Anglesey Archives, WM/2660/1 & 2.

⁵⁶ EWNPC, 1961, p. 449.

⁵⁷ ABMB-AA, WPE/11/3, Llanrhyddlad, 1867, p 77.

⁵⁸ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 13, HN 71. 1881, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, p 13, HN 63.

⁵⁹ England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index [EWCRDI], Q4, 1877, p 256.

⁶⁰ *Y Goleuad*, 28 December 1878.

⁶¹ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanfflewyn, ED 6, p 4, HN 13. 1881, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, p 13, HN 63.

1891, Llanbabo, ED 5, p 9, HN 3. 1901. Llanddeusant, ED 4, p 8, HN 62.

⁶² Guise & Lees, op. cit. p. 150.

house in Llanddeusant village, where he lived with his daughter Myfanwy until his death in 1939, aged 90.^{63,64}

Guise and Lees give a personal account of him, from their discussions with his granddaughter Mrs Eirwen Williams. He was well liked and respected locally and a gifted musician. He organized a local children's choir and allowed them, plus other voice choirs and drama groups, to use the buildings around the mill for practice.⁶⁵

Robert Rowlands had seven daughters and two sons. His eldest son, Hugh, emigrated to Utica, New York in 1888, aged 20, where he was a carpenter. His other son Willie was a miller.⁶⁶ In 1891, aged 18, Willie R Rowlands was an assistant to his great uncle Richard Williams at Melin Selar watermill (where his paternal grandmother had grown up). By 1901 he was back at Bryn Llywelyn in Rhydwyn, living with his other (maternal) grandmother and working as a miller, probably at the ancestral Caerau windmill.⁶⁷ Sadly, like his uncle William Rowlands, he died at the asylum in Denbigh, in 1921 aged 48, having been there for 13 years.⁶⁸ He never married.

Owen Rowlands

The sixth son of William Rowlands was Owen, born around 1851. At the age of 20 he was assisting his eldest brother Rowland at Melin Maengwyn in Gaerwen. He moved back to Caerau where he was living when he married Sarah Jones in 1875.⁶⁹ They then moved to Penrhoslligwy to run Dulas watermill. He worked the mill at Dulas for many years and they had seven children there before Sarah died in 1906, at the age of 51. He then moved to Llangefni where he lived at Pen yr Orsedd, farming and running the nearby watermill on the bank of the Cefni.⁷⁰ He died there in 1922, aged 71.⁷¹

Of Owen and Sarah's five sons, only one eschewed milling. Owen Richard Rowlands went off to Oswestry in his late teens to be an assistant draper in the town centre. By 1911 he had returned to Llangefni where he was working as an assistant draper while living with his father at Pen yr Orsedd. He later set up his own shop at Metro House on the High Street.⁷²

The eldest son William Rowlands (born 1876) appears in the census at Dulas Mill, aged 15, but no trace was found of him in the 1901 and 1911 censuses. It seemed possible that he had died young, but he reappeared in 1921 census, living with the family at Pen yr Orsedd.⁷³ He lived there until his death in 1945 (at the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool).⁷⁴ He doesn't seem to have married or had children.

Owen and Sarah's second son, Rowland W. Rowlands, was born around 1880 and worked for his father at Dulas mill into his 20s. He married Jane Grace Williams in 1910, aged 30.⁷⁵ He appears in the 1911 census, listed with the occupation of miller, but on census night he and his new wife were staying with her family on their farm in Llanddona, so it's not clear where he was living and working at the time. His father and two brothers had moved to Llangefni by this time, and Dulas Mill was occupied by a single man, the miller William Jones. Rowland is likely to have also moved to Pen yr Orsedd, as he was living there in 1921 with his father and brothers Rice and William. By 1939 he had moved on to Frogwy mill near Bodffordd, where he was living in the Tower House, the old windmill that had been converted to a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ EWNPC, 1939, p. 219.

⁶⁵ Guise & Lees, op. cit. p. 150.

⁶⁶ Anglesey Archives, WM/2660/1 & 2.

⁶⁷ Wales Censuses – 1891, Llantrisant, ED 14, p 6, HN 38. 1901, Llanrhyddlad, ED 11, p 9, HN 53.

⁶⁸ The National Archives of the UK, Lunacy Patients Admission Registers; Class: MH 94; Piece: 43:1908.

⁶⁹ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 27 September 1875, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 24, p 17, HN 77. 1881, Penrhoslligwy, ED 9, p 1, HN 7. 1891, Penrhoslligwy, ED 9, p 5, HN 32. 1901, Penrhoslligwy, ED 6, p 1, HN 5. 1911, Llangefni, ED 6, HN 19.

⁷¹ EWNPC, 1922, p. 152.

⁷² Wales Censuses – 1901, Oswestry, ED 14, p 20, HN 119. 1911, Llangefni, ED 6, HN 19. 1939 Register, Llangefni, ED ZADB, District 633-1, HN 169.

⁷³ Wales Censuses – 1921, Llangefni, District 633-1-6, HN 167.

⁷⁴ EWNPC, 1945, p. 838.

⁷⁵ England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index [EWCMI], Q1 1910, pp. 234 & 297.

dwelling, while working the adjacent watermill.⁷⁶ He soon looked into expanding his operations and took over Felin Esgob in Llandyfydog, which had been idle for several years, for his son Glyn to run.⁷⁷ Rowland died in 1956⁷⁸ and Glyn lived at Frogwy for another 10 years.⁷⁹

The two youngest brothers also worked the watermill at Llangefni. In 1911 Edward (born 1884) was living on Chapel Terrace with his new wife and infant son while working as a miller. Within a couple of years he had moved to work at the Plas Mill in Bryngwran. He later became a joiner, living at Nantgate south of Llangefni.⁸⁰ His change of career may have been health related, as he fractured his right arm falling from a horse while serving in the Labour Corps in Norfolk during the First World War, as well as suffering from a hernia.⁸¹ His brother Rice Rowlands (born 1886) also served in the Great War as a driver for the Army Service Corps, for a little less than a year.⁸² He otherwise spent his life farming and milling at Pen yr Orsedd until his death in 1943, unmarried.⁸³

John Rowlands

Finally, we come to the youngest of the seven milling sons of William and Elizabeth Rowlands, John. While most of the other brothers went off to run their own mills, John stayed at Caerau, where he worked the mill while his brother Richard ran the farm. He married Jane Williams in Bangor Cathedral in 1873,⁸⁴ and they had six children before her early death in 1886.⁸⁵ He then returned to the cathedral the next year to marry Ellen Owen,⁸⁶ who was born in Gwytherin, Denbighshire but was then living in Bangor. They had two daughters, one who died in infancy.⁸⁷

John had two sons who went on to be millers. In 1901 at the age of 21 his son John was a miller in Llangefni, boarding with a family at 26 Bridge Street. He most likely was working alongside his uncle Owen and his cousins at the watermill in Pen yr Orsedd, but it is also possible he was working at the windmill at Wynt y Craig. He married Margaret Ellen Hughes from Llanbadrig in 1905⁸⁸ and took over running the windmill at Cemaes from his uncle William.⁸⁹ His wife died young of tuberculosis in 1913; two months later he quit milling and joined the merchant navy.⁹⁰ John retired from sailing in 1927 due to illness, died in 1931 at Caerau farm,⁹¹ and is buried in the Baptist churchyard in Rhydwyn along with his mother and a brother William who died at 8 years old.

John and Jane's other son, Rowland William Rowlands, is the last miller to be discussed in this family history, and also the last miller at the ancestral windmill Drylliau/Caerau. He took over the mill sometime before 1911, after his father moved to the nearby Morawel to farm. Sadly, also in 1911 Rowland's toddler son William Rees Rowlands was killed when he was struck by the moving sails while playing. Another

⁷⁶ Wales Censuses – 1911, Llanddona, ED 7, HN 29. 1911, Penrhoslligwy, ED 9, HN 54. 1939 Register, Twrcelyn, ED ZBCG, District 633-1, HN 59.

⁷⁷ John Crompton, 'Anglesey Mills in 1943', *Melin* 28 (2012): 37–38.

⁷⁸ EWNPC, 1956, p. 1194.

⁷⁹ Anglesey Electoral Registers – 1964, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, p5. 1966, Heneglwys, p 2.

⁸⁰ Wales Censuses – 1911, Llangefni, ED 7, HN 4. 1921, Bodwrog, District 634-11, HN 22. 1939 Register, Llangefni, ED ZBBF, District 633-4, HN 107.

⁸¹ The National Archives; Kew, Surrey, England; War Office: Soldiers' Documents, First World War WO363 (Ancestry.com. UK, British Army World War I Service Records, 1914-1920).

⁸² The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England; War Office: Soldiers' Documents from Pension Claims, First World War WO364 (Ancestry.com. UK, British Army World War I Pension Records 1914-1920).

⁸³ EWNPC, 1944, p. 825.

⁸⁴ Gwynedd Archives [GA], XPE/63/20 Bangor Cathedral, 1873 marriages, p 197.

⁸⁵ Gravestone, Baptist Churchyard, Rhydwyn.

⁸⁶ GA, XPE/63/21 Bangor Cathedral, 1889 marriages, 1887, p 222.

⁸⁷ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 4, HN 21. 1881, Llanrhyddlad, ED 13, p 13, HN 62. 1891, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, p 2, HN 10. 1901, Llanrhyddlad, ED 11, p 2, HN 9. 1911, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, HN 47.

⁸⁸ *Y Genedl Gymreig*, 3 Hydref 1905, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Wales Censuses – 1901, Llangefni, ED 9, p 2, HN 12. 1911, Llanfechell, ED 5, HN 72.

⁹⁰ Anglesey Archives, WM/2660-1&2

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

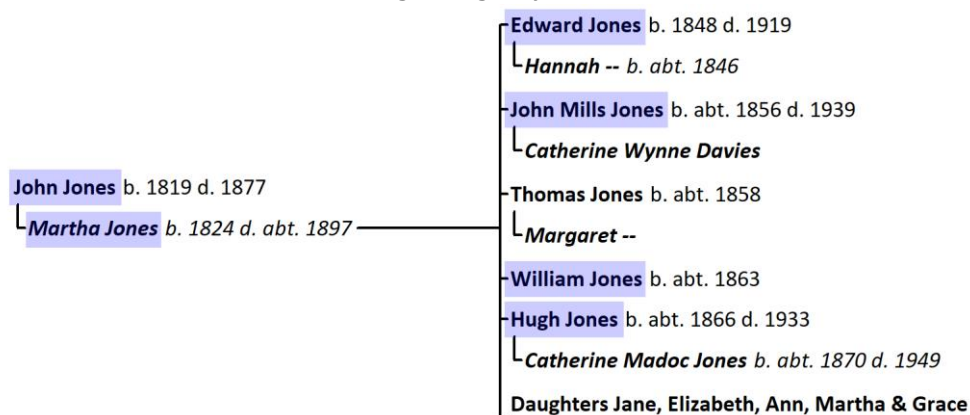
tragedy occurred when the mill was destroyed by fire in 1914.⁹² After this Rowland ran his flour merchant business from the mill’s granary while living in the adjacent house Glanywerydd.⁹³

“The Miller of Mona”

Melin Rhos Fawr, near Brynteg in Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf parish, is sometimes called Mona Mill because of a literary connection. In 1862 George Borrow published *Wild Wales*, an account of his trip around Wales.⁹⁴ In Chapter XXXII he describes his trip to Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf on a mission to find the birthplace of the 18th C poet Goronwy Owen. On arriving in the parish he met a miller and his wife, who invited him into their house for a meal of bread, cheese and tea, sweetened from their sugar bowl reserved for special guests. Borrow says “My eyes filled with tears; for in the whole course of my life I had never experienced so much genuine hospitality”. He later declares “Honour to the miller of Mona and his wife”. Some take this to mean the mill was called Mona, but Borrow uses Mona regularly when referring to Anglesey, so is just saying “the miller of Anglesey”. The miller, John Jones, then took him on a tour of the area.

John Jones was born in Ceidio in 1819, son of the miller John Jones of Melin Rhodogeidio (later called Pandy after conversion to a fulling mill). He in turn was the father and grandfather of five further millers. By the age of 20 he was an assistant miller at Melin Manaw (the same mill as run by one of the William Joneses of Amlwch mentioned above). He married Martha Jones in 1845 and they moved to Rhos Fawr, where they lived at Gloddfa Fawr while he worked the nearby Melin Rhos Fawr, then owned by Robert Owen (who is also mentioned in Borrow’s account as the owner living at the mill). By 1861 they had moved into the house at the mill; perhaps he had now bought it. He ran the mill until his death in 1877,⁹⁵ after which his wife Martha took over the business; she is listed as the miller in trade directories through the 1880s.^{96,97}

John and Martha had 10 children, all of whom survived to adulthood. Of these four of the five sons worked as millers for at least part of their lives. The exception was Thomas, who became a joiner and lived in Birkenhead for a while before returning to Anglesey.⁹⁸



The Jones family of Melin Rhos-Fawr
Those who were millers at least part of their lives are marked blue

Edward Jones

After successfully running the Rhos Fawr mill John wanted to expand his business, so he took over Melin Gallt y Benddu near Llanerchymedd. He installed his eldest son Edward (born 1848) as miller.⁹⁹

⁹² Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 84.

⁹³ Wales Censuses – 1911, Llanrhyddlad, ED 12, HN 50. 1939 Register, ED ZBFA, District 634-1, HN 10.

⁹⁴ George Borrow, *Wild Wales: The People, Language, & Scenery* (London: John Murray, 1862).

⁹⁵ EWNPC, 1877, p. 184.

⁹⁶ Wales Censuses – 1841, Llandrygarn, ED 15, p 3. 1851, Llneuograd, ED 8, p 8, HN 32. 1861, Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf, ED 5, p 2, HN 7. 1871, Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf, ED 5, p 10, HN 59.

⁹⁷ Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 110.

⁹⁸ England Censuses – 1881, Birkenhead, ED 27, p 22, HN 123. Wales Censuses – 1891, Llanfair-Mathafarn-Eithaf, ED 5, p 4, HN 35.

Edward ran the mill for a few years, but then moved to the mainland around 1875 to work the watermill at Aber in Caernarfonshire. By 1891 he was a miller in Llanbeblig, near Caernarfon, where his 15-year-old son Edward was his apprentice. He then moved to Bangor, where he was running a flour merchant business in Friars Avenue in 1901. The 1911 census finds him in Llanrwst, where he ran a grocery shop.¹⁰⁰

John Jones

After Edward left Gallt y Benddu the mill was taken over by his brother John (born 1856). However, John's attentions soon turned to more spiritual matters and he became a Calvinist Methodist preacher.¹⁰¹ At this time he adopted the middle name Mills to honour his family's tradition. He lived with his family at Brynteg for many years before moving back to Llanerchymedd in his 50s.¹⁰² He married late in life, in 1911 aged 55, to Catherine Wynne Davies, sister of Rev William Wynn Davies.¹⁰³

Hugh & William Jones

The departure of Edward and John left Melin Gallt y Benddu in the hands of their youngest brother Hugh, aged just 15 at the time in 1881. By 1891 he had returned to Rhos Fawr to help his mother run the mill. He married Catherine Madoc Jones in 1897¹⁰⁴ and they set up shop in Bodwrog as grocers and flour dealers.¹⁰⁵ Before Hugh returned to Rhos Fawr his older brother William (born 1863) was assisting his mother at the mill. But after the 1881 census there is no trace of him. An online family tree says that he died in America, but with no evidence.

The Grey Family of Pwllfanogl

Another milling dynasty originated at the watermill in Pwllfanogl. This picturesque inlet at the northern mouth of the River Braint was originally a ship building site and terminus of a ferry across the Menai Strait. In the late 18th century the river was diverted to form a mill pond and a corn watermill was built. Activity in the area increased with the founding of a slate works, using waterpower to dress slates and make them into school writing slates. Also in the area was a bacon factory, margarine works and the Boat Inn (later the house and studio of artist Kyffin Williams). The water mill continued grinding corn until sometime between 1901 and 1911, after which it was converted to a furniture warehouse, then a dwelling.^{106,107}

At its closure the watermill had been run for the previous three to four decades by Joseph Williams, son of Owen Williams of Melin Orsedd windmill in Rhoscefnhir (discussed below). But in the early 19th century it was operated by Thomas Grey. Born around 1781, he was the miller at Pwllfanogl from at least 1805, when his daughter Catherine was born there.¹⁰⁸ He ran the mill until his death in 1842,¹⁰⁹ after which it was taken over by his third son Thomas.¹¹⁰

⁹⁹ Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁰⁰ Wales Censuses – 1871, Coedana, ED 3, p 7, HN 39. 1881, Aber, Caernarvonshire, ED 15, p 7, HN 32. 1891, Llanbeblig, Caernarvonshire, ED 8, p 3, HN 15. 1901, Bangor, Caernarvonshire, ED 9, p 27, HN 194. 1911, Llanrwst, Denbighshire, ED 1, HN 47.

¹⁰¹ Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁰² Wales Censuses - 1881, Llanfair-Mathafarn-Eithaf, ED 5, p 4, HN 23. 1891, Llanfair-Mathafarn-Eithaf, ED 5, p 4, HN 35. 1911, Llanerchymedd, ED 3, HN 106.

¹⁰³ *Western Mail & South Wales News*, 1 April 1939, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ EWCRMI, Q4, 1897, pp. 184 & 185.

¹⁰⁵ Wales Censuses – 1881, Coedana, ED 3, p 4, HN 23. 1891, Llanfair-Mathafarn-Eithaf, ED 5, p 4, HN 35. 1901, Bodwrog, ED 4, p 9, HN 60. 1911, Bodwrog, ED 10, HN 53.

¹⁰⁶ Cadw Listed Building Report 19658.

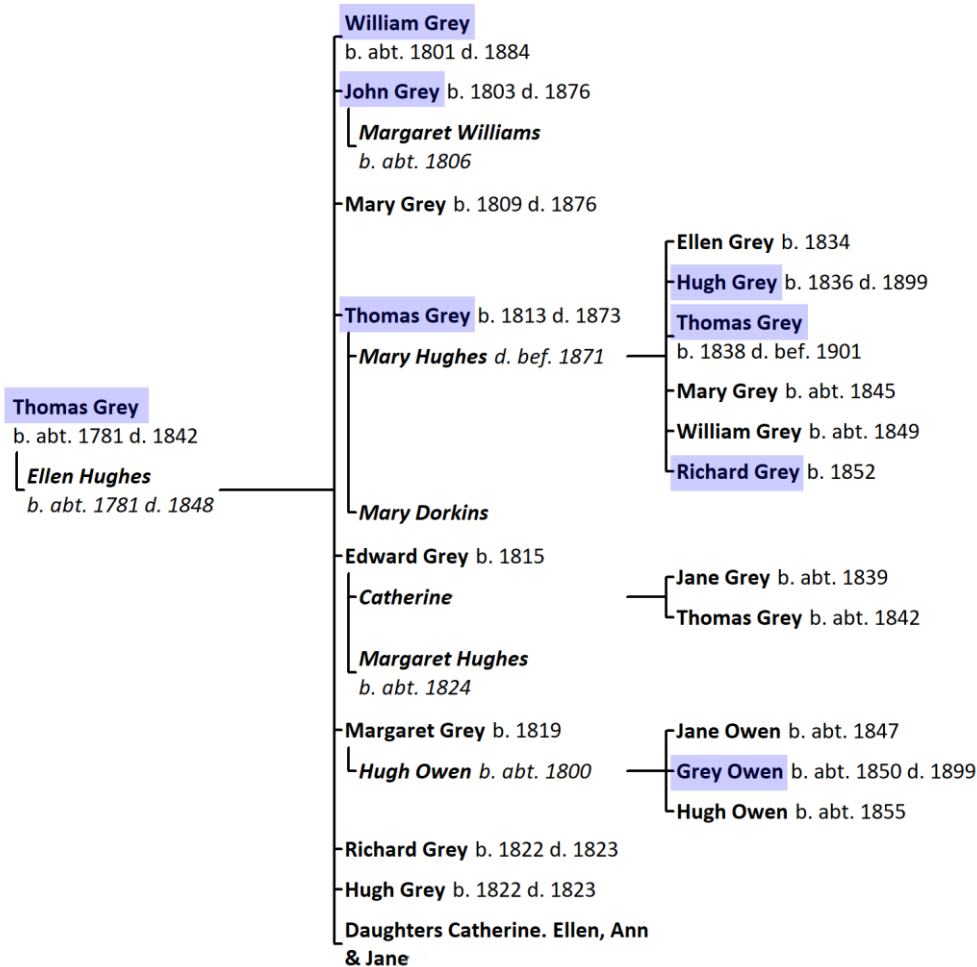
¹⁰⁷ Coflein site record NPRN 402938.

¹⁰⁸ ABMB-AA, WPE/20/2, Llanedwen, 1805 baptisms.

¹⁰⁹ ABMB-AA, WPE/20/7, Llanedwen, 1842 burials.

¹¹⁰ Wales Censuses – 1841, Llanedwen, ED 15, p 4. 1851, Llanedwen, ED 1a, p 17, HN 61.

Of Thomas's four adult sons, three went into milling. The youngest son, Edward (born 1815) started out as a tailor in Menai Bridge but later became a publican, running the California Inn on Station Place in Holyhead.¹¹¹



The Grey family of Pwllfanogl

Those who were millers at least part of their lives are marked blue

William Grey

The eldest, William (born around 1801), was the miller at Felin Engan, a water mill next to the Menai Bridge to Penmynydd road, from sometime before 1841 to the 1870s. He never married, but his sister Mary, also unmarried, lived with him the entire time. After his retirement he lived with another sister, Margaret Owen, a grocer in Trefdraeth.¹¹² He died in 1884.¹¹³

John Grey

The second son, John, was born in 1803 at Tyn y drain, Llanddaniel.¹¹⁴ In 1841 he was running the windmill at Llanddyfnan, which he worked until the 1850s. By 1861 he had crossed the Strait and was working the mill at Aber. In 1871 he was at Cochwillan Mill in Llanllechid, with his nephews Richard Grey (Thomas' son, mentioned below) and Grey Owen (son of grocer Margaret) by his side. John died there in

¹¹¹ Wales Censuses – 1841, Llandysilio, ED 17, p 8, HN 41. 1851, Holyhead, ED 6s, p 8, HN 35.

¹¹² Wales Censuses – 1841, Llansadwrn, ED 10, p 3. 1851, Llansadwrn, ED 6a, p 31, HN 84. 1861, Llansadwrn, ED 10, p 1, HN 2. 1871, Llansadwrn, ED 10, p 15, HN 73. 1881, Trefdraeth, ED 28, p 11, HN 61.

¹¹³ EWCRDI, Q2, 1884, p 120.

¹¹⁴ ABMB-AA, WPE/29/8, Penmynydd, 1803 baptisms.

1876;¹¹⁵ he and his wife Margaret had no children. Grey Owen remained a miller at Llanllechid until his untimely death in 1899, aged 49.^{116,117}

Thomas Grey

In 1841, before coming back to Pwllfanogl to take over from his father, Thomas Jr had been a miller in Llandyfydog, probably running the nearby Melin Esgob. After a few years he moved to Caergybi / Holyhead, where the 1861 census finds him and his son Hugh as millers in Kingsland, probably working Melin yr Ogof (also called George's Mill). Soon after his wife Mary Hughes Grey died and he moved to Llanfaes to run Cichle watermill. In the 1871 census Thomas was listed at Llanddeiniolen, Caernarfonshire, with his daughter Ellen and her husband Ellis Jones, a slate quarryman. Another of Thomas' sons, William, was also there working in the quarries. However, in the same census his other daughter Mary was living at Cichle Mill, listed as "Father's housekeeper", with the note "head of family absent", so Thomas was just visiting his other children on census day.¹¹⁸ Later that year Thomas married for a second time to Mary Dorkins, a domestic servant at Henllys Hall.¹¹⁹ Thomas probably died in 1873.¹²⁰

Thomas had six children, and the birth places of the oldest ones give us clues to Thomas' milling career before the first census in 1841. Eldest daughter Ellen was born in 1833 in Gwalchmai, and her father Thomas is listed on the birth record as a miller, so he may have been working either the windmill there or the watermill near St. Mohairarn's Church. The second child Hugh was born in 1836 at Tyn y Felin in Bodedern. A house of this name stands next to the Melin Llywenan watermill, to the northeast of Bodedern village, but another possibility is the nearby Melin Manaw windmill. Third was Thomas, born 1838 at Felin Traeth watermill in Llanbedrgoch parish, on the shore of Traeth Coch/Red Wharf Bay.¹²¹ The rest of his children, up to Richard in 1852, were born in Pwllfanogl.¹¹⁸ All told, Thomas Grey worked at least seven mills through his life.

Thomas' third son William crossed the Strait to work the slate quarries,¹²² but the other three all became millers. Eldest Hugh started his working career as an errand boy, aged 14, but by 1861 was working as a miller alongside his father in Kingsland, Holyhead.¹¹⁸ The next year he married Mary Griffiths, daughter of a cooper from near Llaneilian, and their first and third children, Owen and Thomas, were born at her family home, Cae Gylfinhir. His occupation is listed as miller, so he was probably working at Melin y Borth in Amlwch port, a mile away, or perhaps Melin Adda in Pentrefelin. But he seemed to regularly travel to work at other mills. Their second child, Margaret, was born in 1865 at Yr Allt, Llanfechell, close to Melin Cemaes, and the 1871 and 1881 censuses finds them living at Caeathro, Llanrug, Caernarfonshire, working either the nearby Bod Rhual flour mill or one of the other numerous corn, slate and woollen mills along the Afon Seiont. Their twin daughters Elizabeth and Ellen were born in Amlwch port in 1876, suggesting he moved back for a while to work Melin y Borth.¹²³ In 1891 the family were still at Llanrug, but he was back in Kingsland helping the widow of the previous miller of at Melin yr Ogof, Mary Owen. His son Thomas was a miller at Llanrug at this time, but no further records could be

¹¹⁵ GA, XPE/62/8, Llanllechid, 1876 burials, p. 41.

¹¹⁶ Wales Censuses – 1841, Llanddyfnan, ED 7, p 11. 1851, Llanddyfnan, ED 5a, p 1, HN 3. 1861, Aber, Caernarvonshire, ED 16, p 15, HN 80. 1871, Llanllechid, Caernarvonshire, ED 13, p 9, HN 38. 1891, Llanllechid, Caernarvonshire, ED 1, p 7, HN 53.

¹¹⁷ EWCRDI, Q1, 1899, p 259.

¹¹⁸ Wales Censuses – 1841, Llandyfydog, ED 2, p 7. 1851, Llanedwen, ED 1a, p 17, HN 61. 1861, Holyhead, ED 8g, p 9, HN 46. 1871, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarvonshire, ED 17, p 2, HN 9. 1871, Llanfaes, ED 3, p 3, HN 10.

¹¹⁹ ABMB-AA, WPE/79/10, Llanfaes, 1871 marriages.

¹²⁰ EWCRDI, Q3, 1873, p 107.

¹²¹ ABMB-AA, WPE/28/4, Trewalchmai, 1833 baptisms. ABMB-AA, WPE/66/25, Bodedern, 1836 baptisms. ABMB-AA, WPE/35/4, Llanbedrgoch, 1838 baptisms.

¹²² Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarvonshire, ED 17, p 2, HN 9.

¹²³ ABMB-AA, WPE/48/13, Llaneilian, 1862 marriages. ABMB-AA, WPE/48/24, Llaneilian, 1863 baptisms. ABMB-AA, WPE/48/24, Llaneilian, 1867 baptisms. ABMB-AA, WPE/34/10, Amlwch, 1865 & 1876 baptisms.

found of him. Hugh died in 1899,¹²⁴ after which his widow set up a grocer and milliner shop in Llanrug, assisted by several of her younger children.¹²⁵

Thomas' second son, also called Thomas, also went to the mainland to work. In 1861 he was a miller, assisting William Parry at Dinorwic Mill, Llanddeiniolen, and in 1871 he was living just a few doors down from his brother Hugh in Caeathro. In 1881 he was at Cochwillan mill in Llanllechid, taking over from his uncle John and probably assisted by his cousin Grey Owen, who was still a miller living nearby. Thomas' youngest brother Richard, who had also worked at Cochwillan mill, was now living in Llanrug with his sister Ellen and her family, working as a miller. Richard appears to have died young and single in 1894. Thomas died sometime before 1901, after which his widow Phoebe moved to Bangor to live with their daughter Mary, who had married a steamship agent. Their son David became a print compositor, first living in Bangor but later in his life moving to Salford, Lancashire.¹²⁶

The Williamses of Melin Orsedd

The final family we'll look at crossed paths with two of the other families discussed above. The early history of Melin Orsedd in Rhoscefnhir, near Pentraeth, is not known, but the earliest records show Owen Williams as the miller from at least 1824 until his death in the 1850s.¹²⁷ Of the six known children he had with Ann Jones, three sons followed him into the milling trade. The mill itself burnt down in the early 20th century and is today just a stump.¹²⁸

William Williams

The eldest son, William, was born at the windmill in 1824.¹²⁹ By the time of his marriage to Margaret Jones of Llanddona, at age 22,¹³⁰ he was running the now demolished Penrhiw windmill in Rhostrehwfa, near Llangefni. After about 10 years he moved to Gaerwen, where he and his brother Joseph (more about him later) were the main millers in the village.¹³¹ There are two windmills in Gaerwen, Melin Sguthan, also called Union Mill, which has now been converted to a house, and Melin Maengwyn, which is still an empty tower. Both of these have been called Gaerwen Mill at various points in their lives, which can make research difficult, but looking at neighbouring properties in the censuses can help distinguish the two.

William didn't actually live at either of the mills, but instead at 1 America Street, part of the main road through Gaerwen and just across the road from Melin Maengwyn. In 1861 his brother Joseph lived at Tan y Felin, close to Melin Sguthan, so it seems likely that Joseph ran Melin Sguthan and William Melin Maengwyn. By 1871 Joseph had left Gaerwen and two of the Rowlands brothers from Melin Drylliau (described above) had arrived. The brothers Rowland Williams and Owen Rowlands were living at Melin Maengwyn, while William was still at 1 America Street. He lived there the rest of his life, but later

¹²⁴ EWNPC, 1900, p. 297.

¹²⁵ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, p 19, HN 83. 1881, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, p 14, HN 69. 1891, Holyhead, ED 17, p 3, HN 21. 1891, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, p 12, HN 76. 1901, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, p 10, HN 60. 1911, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, HN 85.

¹²⁶ Wales Censuses – 1861, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarvonshire, ED 22, p 12, HN 60. 1871, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 5, p 15, HN 73. 1881, Llanllechid, Caernarvonshire, ED 12, p 5, HN 24. 1881, Llanllechid, Caernarvonshire, ED 12, p 7, HN 39. 1881, Llanrug, Caernarvonshire, ED 6, p 19, HN 102. 1891, Llanllechid, Caernarvonshire, ED 1, p 8, HN 61. 1901, Bangor, Caernarfonshire, ED 9, p 28, HN 203. 1901, Bangor, Caernarfonshire, ED 7, HN 28. 1939 Register, Salford, Lancashire, ED NPBF, District 465/1, HN 281.

¹²⁷ Wales Censuses – 1841, Pentraeth, ED 21, p 7. 1851, Pentraeth, ED 6d, p 10, HN 42.

¹²⁸ Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 136.

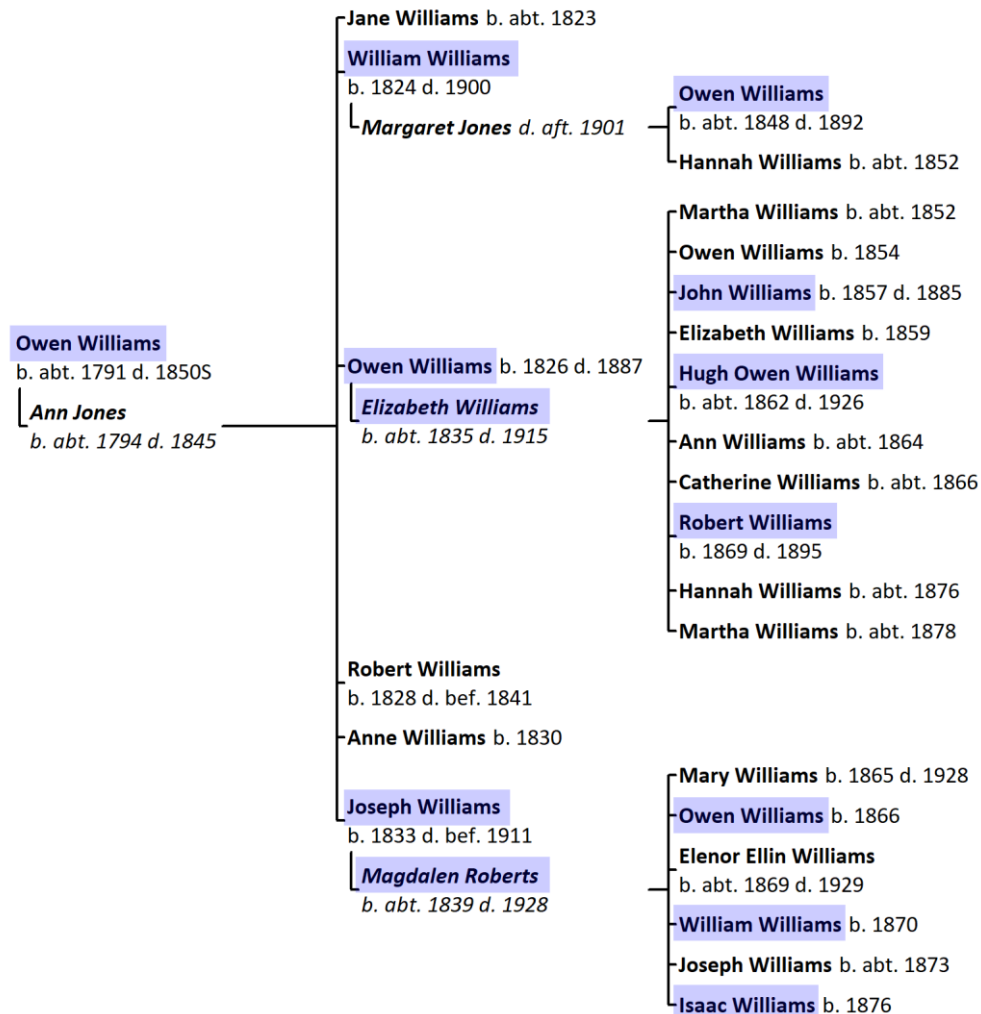
¹²⁹ ABMB-AA, WPE/58/4, Pentraeth, 1824 baptisms.

¹³⁰ ABMB-AA, WPE/33/6, Pentraeth, 1846 marriages.

¹³¹ Wales Censuses – 1851, Cerrigceinwen, ED 6b, p 3, HN 9. 1861, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 23, p 1, HN 1.

records, such as his death notice, specifically say he was associated with Union Mill,¹³² so he had taken over that mill while the Rowlands and their successors ran Melin Maengwyn.¹³³

William and his wife Margaret expanded their business by opening a grocery and flour dealer shop at 1 America Street. Their only son Owen also lived there through the decades, assisting his father as miller at Union Mill. He never married and died at the age of 44 in 1892.¹³⁴ William followed him in 1900,¹³⁵ after which his widow Margaret moved into a small house at the mill, assisted by a 14-year-old domestic servant from Amlwch, also called Margaret Williams.¹³⁶



The Williams family of Melin Orsedd

Those who were millers at least part of their lives are marked blue

Joseph Williams

William's brother Joseph lived in Gaerwen for just a few years, returning to Melin Orsedd sometime in the early 1860s. He apparently became friendly with a young local woman, Magdalen Roberts, because in October 1865 she filed charges before the petty sessions claiming that Joseph was the father of her

¹³² *Y Llan A'r Dywysogaeth*, 26 Ionawr 1900.

¹³³ Wales Censuses - 1871, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 23, p 1, HN 1. 1871, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 24, p 17, HN 77. 1881, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 23, p 14, HN 89. 1891, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 23, p 7, HN 51.

¹³⁴ *The North Wales Chronicle*, 3 September 1892.

¹³⁵ ABMB-AA, WPE/14/27, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, 1900 burials.

¹³⁶ 1901, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 21, p 14, HN 74.

illegitimate child.¹³⁷ However, the case was dismissed as neither of them appeared before the court in Llangefni. Instead, on the same day, they were in Pentraeth church getting married.¹³⁸

Joseph and Magdalen remained in Rhoscefnhir for a couple of years, where their two oldest children (the previously illegitimate daughter Mary and son Owen) were born, but by 1869 they had moved to Pwllfanogl, where Joseph took over the watermill there from the Grey family (discussed above). They had four more children there, sons William, Joseph and Isaac and daughter Ellin. Owen and William spent a while assisting John Griffith in running the Gwna Mill in Trefdraeth around 1891 before returning to Pwllfanogl. Joseph and Isaac remained at Pwllfanogl at that time, with Isaac helping to run the mill and Joseph working at the nearby writing slate factory. Joseph later became a postman in Llanfairpwll and William and Isaac were labourers. Only Owen remained in milling.¹³⁹

The family lived in Pwllfanogl until Joseph's death sometime after 1901. Magdalen then became a miller herself, moving back to Pentraeth with her family to take over the Pentraeth watermill and surrounding farm at Tanyrallt. The eldest son Owen ran the mill, and her daughters Mary and Ellin also lived there. They were all single, although Mary had a young illegitimate daughter, Gwladys. They lived at the mill into the 1920s,¹⁴⁰ when Magdalen and Ellin died within a month of each other in 1928, followed by Mary in early 1929.¹⁴¹ Gwladys married later that year.¹⁴² Owen left the mill sometime before 1934, when it was occupied by Robert Jones.¹⁴³ It's not clear what happened to Owen after this.

Owen Williams

The middle son of Orsedd miller Owen Williams and his wife Ann, also called Owen, was born in 1826.¹⁴⁴ In his 20s he moved to Llanddona to be a milling assistant for William Williams at Bryn Dona, where the now demolished Llanddona windmill stood. Also in the household in 1851 was Elizabeth Williams, the orphaned granddaughter of William. They married later that year¹⁴⁵ and moved to Cae Maes Mawr in Llanddona to run a small farm overlooking Traeth Coch. After her grandfather's death they moved back to Bryn Dona to run the farm and mill.¹⁴⁶

Their oldest two sons, Owen and John, were both agricultural labourers at Bryn Dona in their teens, helping their father. There is no certain sign of Owen after the 1871 census, so it's not known what he went on to do. John may have worked as a corn miller in Bangor for a few years,¹⁴⁷ but returned to Bryn Dona where he died in 1885, aged 28.¹⁴⁸

Their father Owen died in 1887, aged 61,¹⁴⁹ and his wife Elizabeth took over running the mill, calling herself a "windmill miller" in the 1891 census. She was assisted then by her youngest son Robert, who also died just four years later. By 1901 Elizabeth was still running the farm along with her youngest daughter Martha. The mill may have ceased working by this time. Martha married Thomas Evans and they took over the farm, raising their children and looking after her mother until her death in 1915.^{150,151}

Owen and Elizabeth's middle son Hugh Owen Williams (born 1862) was the longest serving miller in the family. After learning his trade at Bryn Dona he moved to Gaerwen, where his uncles William and

¹³⁷ *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, 21 October 1865.

¹³⁸ ABMB-AA, WPE/58/19, Pentraeth, 1865 marriages.

¹³⁹ Wales Censuses – 1871, Llanedwen, ED 12, p 10, HN 4. 1881, Llanedwen, ED 12, p 3, HN 15. 1891, Llanedwen, ED 12, p 5, HN 23. 1891, Trefdraeth, ED 27, p. 9, HN 47. 1901, Llanedwen, ED 10, p 24, HN 44.

¹⁴⁰ Wales Censuses – 1911, Pentraeth, ED 14, HN 86. 1921, Pentraeth, District 631-1, HN 88.

¹⁴¹ ABMB-AA, WPE/35/6, Llanbedrgoch, 1928 burials. ABMB-AA, WPE/58/18, Pentraeth, 1928 burials. ABMB-AA, WPE/58/18, Pentraeth, 1929 burials.

¹⁴² ABMB-AA, WPE/32, Llansadwrn, 1929 marriages., p 72.

¹⁴³ Anglesey Electoral Registers – 1934, Pentraeth, p228.

¹⁴⁴ ABMB-AA, WPE/58/4, Pentraeth, 1826 baptisms.

¹⁴⁵ ABMB-AA, WPE/33/6, Llanddona, 1851 marriages.

¹⁴⁶ Wales Censuses – 1851, Llanddona, ED 8b, p 20, HN 88. 1861, Llanddona, ED 8, p 6, HN 27. 1871, Llanddona, ED 8, p 7, HN 34. 1881, Llanddona, ED 8, p 4, HN 26.

¹⁴⁷ Wales Censuses – 1881, Bangor, Caernarfonshire, ED 6, p 27, HN 151.

¹⁴⁸ ABMB-AA, WPE/56/5, Llaniestyn, 1885 burials.

¹⁴⁹ ABMB-AA, WPE/56/5, Llaniestyn, 1887 burials.

¹⁵⁰ Wales Censuses – 1891, Llanddona, ED 9, p 5, HN 32. 1901, Llanddona, ED 7, p 32, HN 103. 1911, Llanddona, ED 7, HN 4.

¹⁵¹ ABMB-AA, WPE/56/5, Llaniestyn, 1915 burials.

Joseph were living, and took over Melin Maengwyn from Rowland Williams (as described above under the Rowlands family). Soon after moving to the mill he married Laura Pritchard, the daughter of the owner of Maengwyn, Hugh Pritchard of Ty Gwyn, Llanddaniel.¹⁵² Hugh ran the mill for more than 20 years, until it had to close after being damaged by a lightning strike soon after the First World War.¹⁵³ The family moved to farming at the nearby Tyddyn Mawr farm for a few years, but eventually Hugh and Laura moved to Llandudno where their son Hugh Pritchard Williams was a milk dealer.¹⁵⁴ Hugh died there in 1926.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

The Rowlands brothers are the most well-known of the milling families on Anglesey. But as you can see above, there were several other millers whose sons, grandsons and wives spread out across the island and over the Strait, bringing their skills and knowledge to other mills. These families flourished during the peak period of the milling at small local wind- and watermills in the mid to late-19th century, but as demand for their skills dropped and mills closed so too did the numbers remaining in the trade.

Out of the 46 people mentioned in this paper who were involved in milling at some point in their lives, 23 remained millers all their lives (although seven died relatively young). Many of them were also farming land associated with their mills. Nine others switched to farming fulltime after their mills closed. Six former millers retained their interest in the flour business by becoming flour/corn merchants and grocers. Seven of the adult sons eschewed milling and went into vocations such as carpentry, drapery, tailoring, quarrying, postal delivery and preaching.

It was mostly sons who took over milling from their fathers, but three women are discussed here who took over operations from their husbands after their deaths (Martha Jones at Rhos Fawr, Elizabeth Williams at Llanddona, and Magdalen Williams at Pwllfanogl and then Pentraeth). They weren't the only ones. Melin yr Ogof (St George's Mill) in Kingsland, Holyhead, was run by Mary Owen after her husband Owen's death in 1884, and Jane Pritchard continued operating Melin Llidiart in Capel Coch after her husband Hugh died.

Work continues on investigating the millers of other wind and watermills on Anglesey, and there will certainly be other interesting stories to find.

Note: this is the manuscript of a paper published in the Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society. There are some minor differences between this and the final published text. Also, this manuscript does not include the photos of the mills and the people associated with them.

¹⁵² *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 3 April 1891.

¹⁵³ Guise & Lees, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁵⁴ Wales Censuses – 1891, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 24, p 10, HN 81. 1901, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 21, p 13, HN 67. 1911, Llanfihangel Esgeifiog, ED 17, HN 16.

¹⁵⁵ EWNPC, 1927, p. 396.

Dr Warren Kovach was born and raised in Ohio, USA. After receiving his PhD degree at Indiana University for research in palaeobotany and palaeoecology he moved to the UK, working at the universities of Aberdeen and Aberystwyth. He later moved to Anglesey where he develops and sells scientific data analysis software alongside exploring the history of the island. He is the author of the Anglesey-History.co.uk website, which highlights aspects of the island's history, and has written three books for Amberley Publishing, *Anglesey Through Time*, *Anglesey in 50 Buildings* and *A-Z of the Isle of Anglesey*.

Brodor o dalaith Ohio, yn yr UDA yw'r **Dr Warren Kovach**. Ar ôl ennill gradd PhD ym Mhrifysgol Indiana, a hynny am ymchwil ym maes paleobotaneg a phaleoecoleg, fe symudodd i'r DU i fyw, gan weithio ym mhrifysgolion Aberdeen ac Aberystwyth. Yna, daeth i Ynys Môn, ble mae'n datblygu a gwerthu meddalwedd dadansoddi data gwyddonol, ac ar yr un pryd yn astudio hanes yr ynys. Ef yw awdur gwefan Anglesey- History.co.uk sy'n edrych ar agweddau o hanes yr ynys. Mae'n awdur sydd wedi ysgrifennu tair cyfrol ar gyfer Cwmni Cyhoeddi Amberley: *Anglesey Through Time*, *Anglesey in 50 Buildings* a'r *A-Z of the Isle of Anglesey*.