



Williams Family History Overview Report

Completed December 2024
Welsh Family History

Client Brief

The client initially commissioned six hours of research into the family history of her 4th great-grandparent, William Williams, this was followed by a further six hours following the first edition of this report. William was believed to have worked in an industrial role in the Merthyr area before emigrating to the United States with his family at the age of 50. In the USA, William was employed as an Iron Roller; however, his confirmed immigration records list his occupation as a farmer, presenting a notable discrepancy which we will discuss in this report.

The client has also provided DNA connections to Alwyn Hughes from North Wales, indicating that the Williams family may have migrated from North to South Wales during the 18th century, likely in pursuit of better work opportunities. Two possible links to the Hughes family have been identified.

The first connection is through Sarah Anne Williams (born 1850) from Llanbeblig, Caernarvonshire, the daughter of Robert and Catherine Williams, who joined the Hughes line through her marriage to Henry Parry. The second link traces back to Sarah Hughes, who married into the Williams family in 1775.

Research Summary

This research project has presented significant challenges, as we encountered many of the same inconsistencies that have long frustrated other Williams family researchers. The project centres on three key questions: which birth record corresponds to William Williams, who his wife was, and where their first child Eleanor was born.

These questions hinge on whether William Williams and his wife originated from North or South Wales. Given the limited time allocated for the first stage of this project, our research focused on attempting to prove the existing South Wales theories. However, we also identified a compelling alternative theory linked to the historic village of Trefriw in Caernarvonshire, North Wales. In our view this scenario was more likely, and we recommended this alternative hypothesis be explored by the client in greater depth for future research.

After being commissioned to complete further research, we resumed our searches in North Wales to confirm the identity of William Williams. We consulted parish birth records and marriage records held by the National Library of Wales to identify likely candidates for Williams and eventually traced him to the historic village of Aber in the former county of Caernarvonshire (Caernarfonshire) where he was born and baptised in 1832 to an established local family.

Ancestry Research

Our research began on Ancestry by reviewing the client's family tree along with 11 other connected trees related to the Williams family's emigration. It became evident that the American history of the Williams family has been thoroughly documented, with details of marriages, occupations, and dates of death well-established. Consequently, our research focused exclusively on the family's Welsh history.

The review of existing Ancestry family trees provided limited clarity on this aspect. William Williams is believed to have been born around 1782 (US death records suggest 1785), with his wife recorded as either Mary, Ann/e, or Mary Ann/e. Two conflicting birth years, 1789 and 1780, are commonly attributed to her. A potential name for William's father - Samuel Williams, born circa 1762 - has been identified, along with a possible spouse named Mary.

Discrepancies also exist regarding the date of William's marriage to Mary or Ann/e, or Mary Ann/e. This lack of clarity is not surprising, the records of working class people in Wales prior to the first census in 1841 are limited, economic migration was rife, registering births was not compulsory, and Williams was a popular surname.

While the possibility that all six of William's children were born in the Merthyr area is interesting at first glance, discrepancies in the records raised doubts. For instance, birth and baptism records identified for Jane Williams suggest locations outside Merthyr, while Eleanor's most commonly used birth record is listed in North Wales. The name of the mother is also inconsistent.

Therefore, we also examined North Wales parish records to explore whether William Williams may have been born and married in the north before relocating for work, and then move our main search to South Wales.

Emigration to the United States

We know that the Williams Family arrived in New York on 2nd October 1832. They sailed in steerage on the Ship John Taylor, which left Liverpool, England on 22nd September 1832. The manifest listed the Williams family as coming from Wales and provided the following details:



William Williams	Age 50	Farmer
Mrs Williams	Age 42	
Eleanor Williams	Age 19	
Jane Williams	Age 17	
Nancy Williams	Age 14	
Mary Williams	Age 9	
Susan Williams	Age 8	
Samuel Williams	Age 4	

The ships manifest has been transcribed here:

<https://www.immigrantships.net/v23/1800v23/johntaylor18321002.html>

This record is invaluable for research as it gives us approximate dates of birth for all 8 of the Williams family, although how we wish Mrs Williams had a first name listed!

The farming occupation is also interesting as it appears to question the nature of William's work in Merthyr, although our client has suggested an explanation for this. The United States was a popular choice for Welsh farmers in the 19th century although no assisted travel was offered.

Who was William Williams?

Establishing a year of birth is of course critical, the travel document included above suggests 1882, whilst the New Jersey, Deaths and Burials Index place the year of birth as 1885. The majority of family researchers have selected to use 1882 although supporting documents are scarce. As the migration document was completed by William, we gave priority to the 1882 date for our search parish records.

Caernarvonshire

We have looked at candidates named William Williams born in 1782 who were no longer present in the county by the 1841 census. This left us with four candidates from a long list of 11.

Born	Baptised	Where	Parents
March 1882	7 Apr 1782	Abergwyngregyn	John & Sarah
1882	Sept 1782	Clynnog Fawr	John & Elizabeth
1882	23 June 1782	Bryncroes	Robert & Elizabeth
Jan 1882	17 Feb 1782	Bangor	Lewis & Ann



Glamorgan

Applying the same filter to Glamorgan, a popular staging point for worker migration to Merthyr, produced just two likely candidates.

Born	Baptised	Where	Parents
1882	29 Sep 1782	Cilybebyll	Samuel & Mary
08 Mar 1782	10 Mar 1782	Aberavon	William & Mary

Merthyr and Cardiff

Finally we looked at William William's born closer to Merthyr and again only found two possible matches.

Born	Baptised	Where	Parents
1882	11 Feb 1872	Sully	James & unknown
1882	27 Jan 1872	Cardiff	Charles & Ann

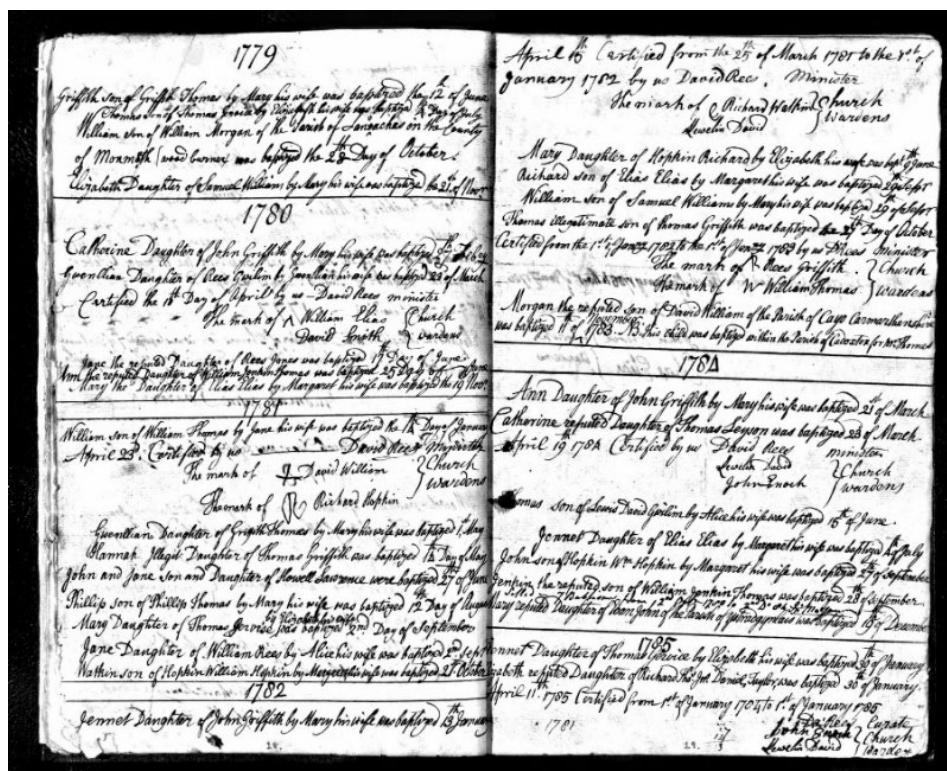


RESEARCH STAGE ONE

The Williams Family of Merthyr

Examining the lineage of each potential William Williams and the timelines for when they left their homes, we believe that if the William who later arrived in Merthyr was from South Wales, he would have been most likely born in Cilybebyll in the Swansea Valley in 1782 and baptised on 29th September 1782 at The Church of St John the Evangelist.

The father of this William Williams may have originated from North Wales and migrated south in search of work. We completed some searches on his father Samuel and he would appear to have family roots in North West Wales.



Baptism record from Cilybebyll, Glamorganshire

Cilybebyll lies near Pontardawe, which, in the 18th century, was at the centre of the burgeoning copper industry, drawing workers from across Wales and beyond. Swansea's first copper works were established in Landore in 1720 by Dr. Lane and Mr. Pollard, who had previously owned copper mines in Cornwall.

By that time, Swansea had earned a reputation as "the best built and most cleanly town in all Wales," eventually becoming widely known as Copperopolis. Merthyr eventually replaced Swansea as the most industrial town in Wales which may explain William's move to Merthyr in pursuit of opportunities.





The Church of St John the Evangelist, Citybeyll

The Family Line of William Williams

We believe the father of 'Citybeyll William' was Samuel Williams born early in 1762 in Llangollen, Denbighshire and baptised 11th February 1762. His parents were Edward Williams (1741-1821) and Hannah (1743-1827), who had both grown up in Llangollen. They married in 1760, and Samuel was their first born son in 1762. Traces of Edward and Catherine are scarce; although we believe they are both buried at St Collen's Church, 8 Church St, Llangollen LL20 8HU and a photo exists of their tomb.

Ancestry record –

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/records?recordId=206986&collectionId=9740&tid=192257134&pid=302616092143&queryId=690f0e78-5dff-46a6-ba37-1ad3919a056c&_phsrc=YbF14257&_phstart=successSource

There are no further records for Samuel until his move to South Wales and marriage to a local lady Mary, from nearby Neath. Although we have nothing in writing to confirm his occupation, we would assume Samuel moved to the Neath area to work in the copper industry or coal mining.

The marriage of William Williams

From the three potential marriage records in the Merthyr area, we believe the record dated March 15th, 1813, is the most likely match for 'Citybeyll William'. This date aligns closely with the birth of the first child, Eleanor, which fits the common pattern of children being born within 12 months of marriage during this period. In addition we can find no trace of our William Williams in the Swansea area after 1810.



Based on this conclusion, we prioritised the name Ann Davies (later Williams) as William Williams' wife, with additional research material now available from her relatives, Mary and David Davies. This record also established William's presence in Merthyr by 1813.

MARRIAGES solemnized in the Parish of <u>Merthyr Tydfil</u>	
in the County of <u>Glamorgan</u> in the Year 18 <u>13</u>	
<u>William Williams</u>	of <u>the</u> Parish
<u>of Dagnor</u>	
and <u>Ann Davies</u>	of <u>this</u> Parish
were married in this <u>Church</u>	by <u>Licence</u> with Consent of
<u>David Davies</u>	this <u>fifteenth</u> Day of
<u>March</u>	in the Year One thousand eight hundred and <u>thirteen</u>
By me <u>Mr. Jones Curate</u>	
This Marriage was solemnized between us {	<u>Wm Williams</u>
	<u>Ann Davies</u>
In the Presence of {	<u>Mary Davies</u>
	<u>David Davies</u>
No. 16.	

The marriage of a William and Ann

The Six Children

We revisited the birth records of the six children to cross-check their ages as listed on the 1832 travel documents and to support the theory of the 1813 Merthyr marriage. The birth of Eleanor, however, raises several questions. According to her travel records, she was born between September 22 1812, and September 21 1813. Yet, no births for an Eleanor Williams were registered in South Wales during this period.

Across all of Wales during this timeframe, only seven Eleanor Williams births were recorded to a William Williams. However, none of these records list a mother named Ann. The closest match we found was for an Elinor Williams, baptised on September 13, 1813, to William and Mary in Llandrygarn, Anglesey and an Eleanor Williams born in Caernarvonshire during 1811 to a William and Anne Williams. While we could not connect this record to other known facts, it remained a potential lead worth further exploration.

The absence of a birth record for Eleanor alone may not be significant. Compulsory civil registration did not begin until 1837, so many births before this date went unrecorded. It is also possible that the record was lost, has not been digitised, or that Eleanor was registered under a different name and later adopted the name Eleanor as an adult. However doubts also exist for the four of the six children who emigrated.



Name	Born	Baptised	Where	Parents	Age at travel	Match to travel?
Eleanor Williams	1812-1813	No viable record identified in the Merthyr area			19	n/a
Jane Williams	1816	No viable record identified in the Merthyr area			17	n/a
Nancy Willams	1818	No viable record identified in the Merthyr area			14	n/a
Mary Ann Williams	Jan 1923	8 th June 1923	Llanfabon, Merthyr Tydfil	William & Ann Williams	9	Yes
Susan Ann Williams	1824	23 May 1824	Brecon, north of Merthyr	William & Ann Williams	8	Yes
Samuel Williams	Jan 1828	Jan 1828	Merthyr Tydfil	William & Ann Williams	4	Yes

Birth record links

Mary Ann –

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60217/records/1378955?tid=&pid=&queryid=c27e01f8-4e15-4912-9f86-4114b468220b&_phsrc=YbF14381&_phstart=successSource

Susan Ann –

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62099/records/194682?tid=&pid=&queryid=81e954cb-ec1f-48a0-afeb-0608263eb3f5&_phsrc=YbF14396&_phstart=successSource

Merthyr in the 1820s

In the 1820s, Merthyr Tydfil was a rapidly expanding town in South Wales that was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution. Merthyr Tydfil's population grew from 7,000 to almost 90,000 people. The town was home to the world's largest ironworks, and 80% of Britain's iron exports came from there. Merthyr Tydfil was home to some of the earliest innovations in iron bridges and steam locomotives. The ironmasters of Merthyr adopted new manufacturing processes, including the Welsh method.

The "truck system" was a practice used by iron masters to pay workers with tokens that could only be used at their masters' shops. This led to low wages, poor working conditions, and social unrest. In 1831, workers united in the Merthyr Rising, taking control of the town for four days. Just a year later the Williams family left for the United States.



Summary of Stage One Research

Despite searching across multiple sites we did not manage to identify the records required to report, with confidence, that any of the identified Merthyr marriages resulted in the six children who later emigrated to the United States.

This could be because the records simply don't exist or for one of the following reasons.

- William & Ann married and raised a family elsewhere and arrived in Merthyr in the 1820's where they had a sixth child. Moving to Merthyr was a choice made by tens of thousands of families at this time.
- William & Ann never actually came to Merthyr, they were a North Wales family who only left the area when they sailed from Liverpool, the local port for North Wales.

RESEARCH STAGE TWO

The Williams Family of Trefriw

As we struggled to identify supporting documents for the Merthyr theory in our stage one research, we decided to test alternative theories. To do this we searched the index of UK births looking for a match with at least three of the six children's names and dates of birth. Surprisingly, this did lead to one match – in the small village of Trefriw, Caernarvonshire. Adding in the names of the parents gave us the following four potential matches:

Eleanor Williams – born 1811 in Llanrwst (adjoining village to Trefriw) to William Williams & unnamed mother

Jane Williams - born 23 May 1816 in Trefriw, to William Williams & Anne Davies

Nancy Williams - born 15 Apr 1821 in Trefriw, to William Williams & Anne Davies

Mary Williams - born 1823 in Trefriw, to William Williams & Anne Davies

While this could be coincidental, the names involved are relatively uncommon, and the villages in question are very small. The Anne Williams identified as the mother of the daughters mentioned above, was born in January 1789 and baptised on January 16, 1789, in Trefriw.

Although we were initially unable to definitively trace their father, William, we did identify a William Williams recorded as living in Trefriw until 1825. While not conclusive, this provided a plausible timeline for the family's departure to Merthyr, where their final son



was born in 1828. This data is sourced from the *Biography Database, 1680–1830* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: Avero Publications, 1998).

Click here to see a map of the village from the 1900's.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=17.0&lat=53.15734&lon=-3.82753&layers=257&right=ESRIWorld>

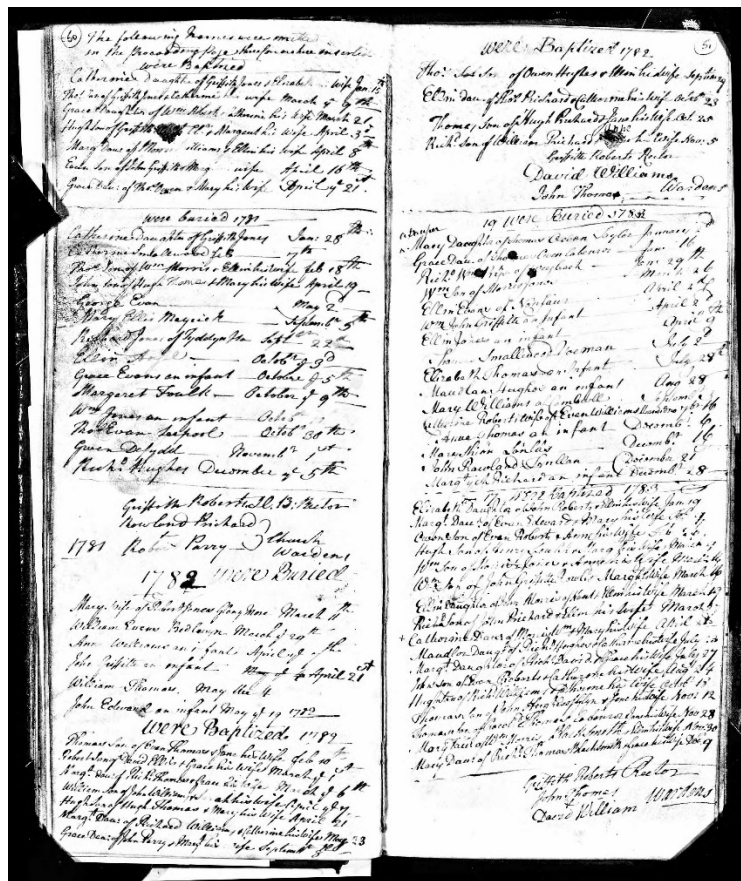
William Williams b.1782

During stage two of the project we were successful in finding the Willaim Williams who married Anne in Trefriw. He was born in March 1782 in Aber, the commonly used name for Abergwyngregyn. It is a village and community of historical note that now sits in Gwynedd, a county in North Wales. The last trace of William in Aber was 1801 where he was a farm labourer, he then appeared 20 miles away in Trefriw where he married Anne Davies in 1810.



We also discovered the parents and grandparents of William, as well as three siblings. His parents were John and Sarah Williams of Aber who baptised their son in the local church on 7th April 1782. This is supported by a surviving baptism record. In turn, John was also born in Aber during 1750 to parents William and Catherine Willams. With several generations of the Williams family from this small North Wales village we took a closer look at its fascinating history.



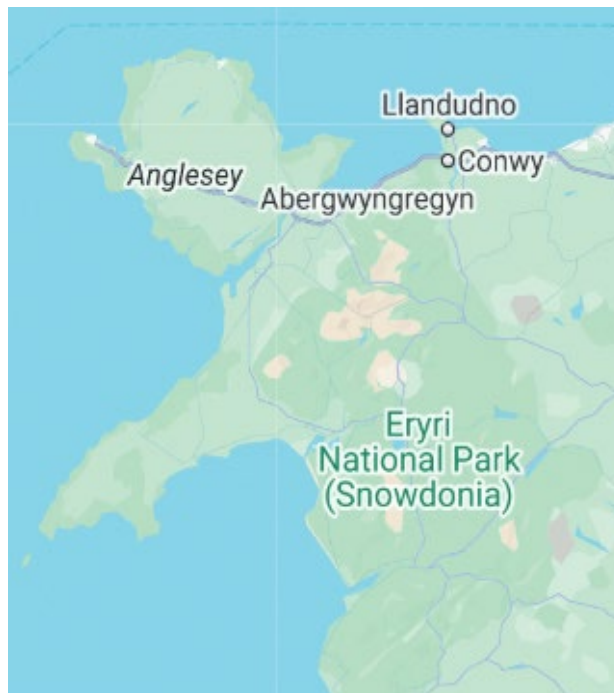


The baptism of William Williams 7th April 1782.

Abergwyngregyn

Abergwyngregyn is a charming, historic village tucked into a valley at the northern edge of the Carneddau mountain range. Situated along the North Wales Coast between Bangor and Llanfairfechan, it overlooks the Menai Strait, directly across from Beaumaris.

The Aber Valley's rich history spans over 4,000 years, serving as a hub of early industry and once home to the royal princes' court. Visitors can learn more about its fascinating past from the information displays at Tŷ Pwmp, near the village entrance.



Abergwyngregyn was once the residence of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last native Prince of Wales. His daughter, Gwenllian of Wales, was born here in June 1282, but the event was marked by tragedy, as his wife, Eleanor de Montfort, passed away on June 19, 1282, shortly after giving birth.

In June 1283, Llywelyn's brother, Dafydd ap Gruffudd, who had taken the title of Prince of Wales following Llywelyn's death in December 1282, was captured on Bera Mountain, overlooking the village. In 2009, Abergwyngregyn was selected as one of ten sites for the Welsh Cultural Heritage Initiative. The village remains a predominately Welsh speaking village.



Old flour mill, Abergwyngregyn c.1820

John Williams b.1750 (William's father)

John was born in the village of Aber in 1750 to parents Robert and Margaret and christened 02 Jan 1750 in the local church. He had an older sibling named Morris who was born in 1744. In December 1775, Morris married Mary Jones on 27th November 1772 and lived locally until his death in 1805.

At the age of 25, John married Sarah Hughes in the parish church of Aber, which once stood on the site of the current 19th-century churchyard. Together, they had at least four children: Catherine (born 1777), Hugh (born 1780), William (born 1782) and Ann (born 1790).

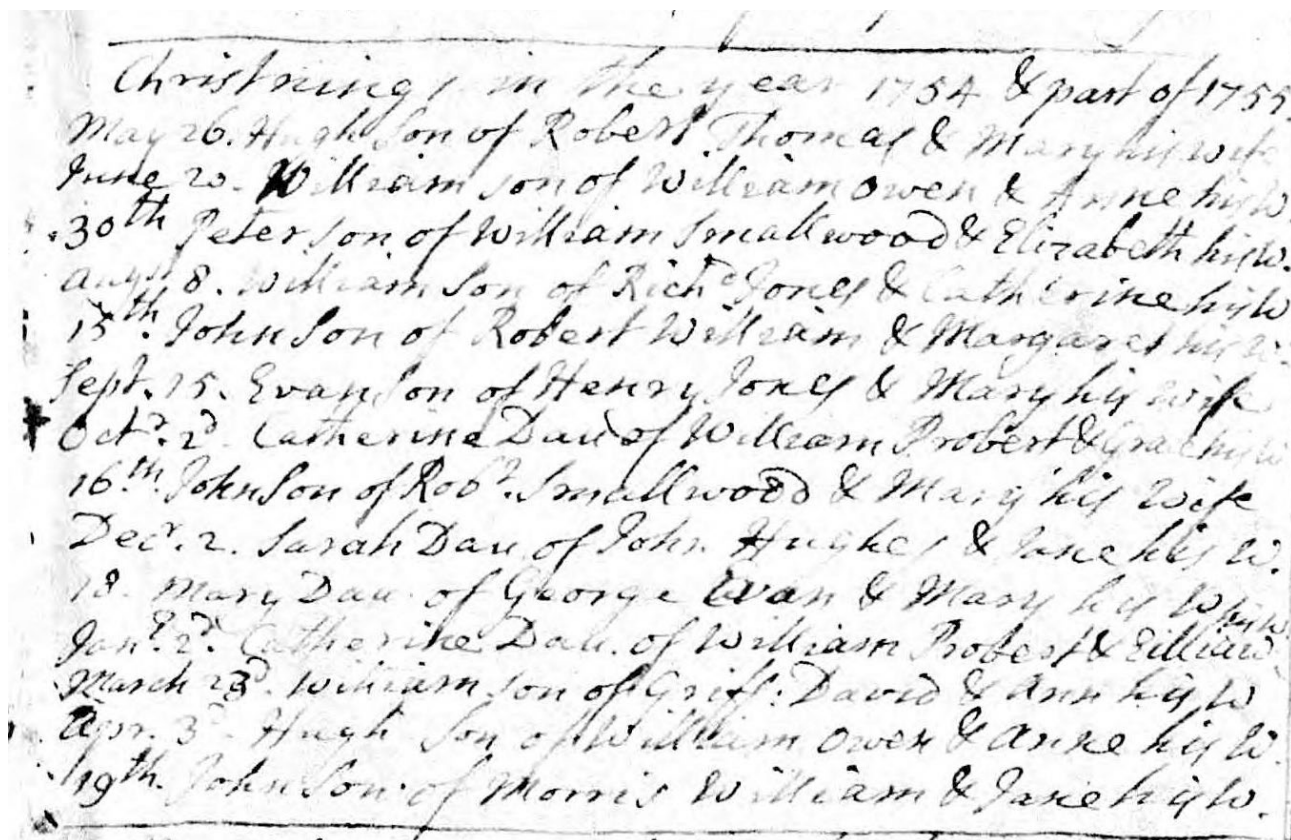
The surname Hughes is interesting, as it connects to the North Walian DNA link with the Hughes family, provided by or client. Sarah Hughes was born in Aber in 1754 and baptised on 2nd December of that year. Her parents were John Hughes and Jane Parry.

The Williams family resided at Nant Heilyn in Abergwyngregyn for several generations. Nant Heilyn is a wooded area along the North Wales Pilgrim's Way in Abergwyngregyn.



This link identifies a possible location for the family home, interestingly it is situated near a quarry which was a large local employer.

<https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/placenames/recordedname/9105b6d6-be71-4446-93fc-f6810aaf97c3>



Baptism of Sarah Hughes 2nd December 1754

It is believed that both John and Sarah spent their entire lives in Aber and are buried at St. Bodfan Churchyard in the village. John is thought to have died around 1829, though the exact date of Sarah's death remains unknown.

Church information: <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/43704/>

So what became of Williams's siblings who remained living locally? Hugh married Ellen, raised a family and remained in Aber for his whole life. In the 1940s we know he worked as a Parish Clerk in the village.

Youngest sibling Ann married William Griffiths, and they had a daughter named Elizabeth (1829-1891) in Holywell, Flintshire. Ann lived a long life, on the 1861 census she was widowed and living in Holywell, where she ran a lodging house. Her daughter emigrated to the USA and died in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. Finally of Catherine, the youngest sibling, we could find no trace.



William Williams b.1723 (William's grandfather)

William Williams was born in Aber during 1723 and baptised on 1st March 1723, his parents were John William and Elizabeth Rowland who had grown up in the village. William married Catherine on 9th December 1743 in the parish church.

The couple had at least two children, Morris 1744-1805, and John 1750-1829. The family also lived at Nant Heilyn, Abergwyngregyn until the untimely death of Catherine in 1760, aged only 37.

Morris married twice, to Jane Roberts in 1767 who died in childbirth and Mary Jones in 1772. Morris had a number of children: Elizabeth 1772, Grace 1774, Robert 1776, Catherine 1777 and Mary 1779. Morris died in September 1805 whilst living at Henfaes in Abergwyngregyn.

Henfaes Farm is now a research centre for the University of Bangor. It offers unrivalled opportunities to study diverse environments from sea-level to amongst the highest land in Snowdonia, all on one farm. Alongside this active commercial farming continues a tradition that has been ongoing for centuries.

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/422226/?term=Abergwyngregyn>

Earlier Generations

We also had a brief look at William's early ancestors and discovered that William's great-grandfather and 2x great-grandfather were also born in Aber.

John Williams | 1704 – 1802

Thomas Williams | 1685 - ?

William Leaving Abergwyngregyn


Leaving his family home in Aber for Trefriw would have been a significant step for William, as his family had lived in Aber for several generations and were well established in the area. It's likely that he moved to Trefriw in search of work, where he met Anne.

The couple married and settled in the village, raising four daughters. They lived at a property called Bryn-y-Popty, with William working as a farm labourer. We consulted old maps of the village but couldn't locate the property.



William Williams

in the U.K. and U.S. Directories, 1680-1830



[Add or update information](#)

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Detail	Source
Name	William Williams
Dates	1801-1825
Location	Trefriw
Gender	Male
Address(es)	Bryn y popty
Source Date	1812
Source Info	Subscribed to, Blwch Caniadau, neu Gasgliad o Gynganedd: yn cynwys Carolau, Cerddi, Awdlau, Cywyddau, ac Englynion. O waith amryw Awdwyr, ar amryw Destynau. Gan John Jones Llansantffraid., 1812, JONES, John, Trefriw. Argraffwyd gan I. Davies.; subject: religion

About Trefriw

Trefriw is a special village with a rich history. Nestling in the Conwy Valley between Dolgarrog and Gwydir Castle, it is flanked by the sheltering 287-metre peak of Gwinllwm which is festooned with the densely-packed trees of Coed-y-Wern. The name Trefriw comes from two ancient Welsh words meaning Healing Town. Its spring water is rich in iron and patients travelled here to take advantage of its properties in the 19th Century.

In 1817 a free school was founded in Trefriw by Lord Willoughby de Eresby, for the benefit of poor children of the village, and those from the adjoining parishes. The earliest mill, a pandy, dates back to the 15th century. In 1820 a new pandy was built, this still carrying the faded name "Vale of Conwy Woollen Mill".

By early in the 19th century the village had a water-powered fulling mill (replacing the former cottage industry which dated back centuries), but serious development of the industry began only after it was bought by Thomas Williams in 1859. The current woollen mill is still owned by the descendants of Thomas Williams. The current roadside mill building, sited below the original buildings, was built in the 1970s.





Trefriw 19th century

Arriving in Merthyr

Sometime in 1825, the family joined the exodus leaving the north for the South Wales valleys, seeking opportunities in the industrial sector. They settled in Merthyr where their fifth son Samuel was born in 1828. Jobs were plentiful but life was hard, and in 1832 the William's family decided to seek a better life in the USA. Between 1820 and 1950, 89,603 people left Wales for America.

Our Conclusions

After examining two potential family lines, we are confident that the William Williams, who emigrated to the USA in 1823, originated from the North Wales village of Abergwyngregyn. While some records remain elusive, we have gathered substantial evidence to support this conclusion. Key factors include a well-established family lineage in Aber, a DNA link to the Hughes family, birth records for his four daughters in Trefriw, and documentation indicating that the family left Trefriw in 1825, with no further records for the family found in North Wales.

Additionally, a birth record for their son Samuel in Merthyr and an American document indicating his birthplace as Glamorgan suggest that the family relocated to Merthyr before their emigration.



Places to Visit

Should our client visit North Wales we would recommend several places to visit.

- St Bodfan's Church, Abergwyngregyn is home to several generations of Williams' graves (the graves are likely to be in Welsh).
- The village of Trefriw to identify Bryn-y-Popty, the former home of William Williams.
- Nant Heilyn, the family home in Abergwyngregyn



Could this be the remains of a cottage?

