

## My Trip to Wales

Sheep graze the hedgerow-divided pastures on the dramatic green hills of Wales. The sheep quadruple the human population, who inhabit picturesque stone houses with slate roofs. On my recent visit to Wales, I asked myself more than once what possessed my ancestors to forsake this freshwater Eden for a salt-lake desert. I knew the answer. Their peculiar religion sparked intense persecution, making a Babylon of their fertile homeland. Zion's Trumpet warned them to gather in a distant wilderness where they could escape God's wrath, and worship in peace.

On May 1, 2008, I took a train from London to the west coast of Wales. I stayed in Aberystwyth, a charming but lively university town overlooking Cardigan Bay. I spent eight full days at the National Library of Wales, gathering hundreds of pages of information about Llandeilo'r-fân parish. The library opened at 9:30 and closed at 6:00, and I used every minute to my advantage, not even pausing for lunch. Exhausted at closing time, I generally spent my evenings relaxing on the beach. On the days the library was closed, I went sightseeing.

On May 11, I hired a car and went to Llandeilo'r-fân. Because it was a live-firing day at the Sennybridge Training Area, the military denied permission to see the actual houses where my ancestors lived. However, I saw the parish church where they were baptized, married and buried. The Church Warden, Valerie Lewis, unlocked the church door with a huge skeleton key and allowed me to examine the Parish Registers. St. Teilo's was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and partially restored in 1875. It's a bit musty and in need of repair, but it's still beautiful, interesting, and delightful. It's surrounded by the tombstones of my relatives and their neighbors.

Also on May 11, I saw the church at Llywel, where Daniel Williams married Ruth Jones in 1805. It's a fascinating old stone structure, resembling a castle as much as a church. I also saw Brecon Beacons National Park on the way to visit Celia and Gareth Morgan. Celia helps me with my research, and she's a great cook, too. Her Yorkshire pudding was fabulous.

I reluctantly left Wales on May 13, but I spent a grand day in London before returning to Tennessee. In London I saw *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the historically-correct reconstruction of William Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. For years I've been yearning to see a show at the Globe, and I wasn't disappointed. I highly recommend it as something everyone should do before they die.

Economically, the dollar has lost so much value that the exchange for pounds was not in my favor. Everything costs twice as much in the United Kingdom than in the United States. However, I didn't let that spoil my vacation. The spring weather was pleasant, the people were friendly and helpful, and I had a wonderful time.

So much for the travelogue. My purpose was to discover more about my ancestors, so here's my genealogical report:

## Discoveries

I did not succeed in finding new ancestors, but I discovered more details about my known ancestors, and I'm laying the groundwork for further research.

### Thomas Jones & Ruth Thomas

Although I focused on the Williams line, I did take a few minutes to look into other Welsh branches of the family tree. I'm happy to report that I cleared up a contradiction about the marriage of Thomas Jones and Ruth Thomas (parents of Mary Jones who married John Jones Williams). The discrepancy was between two family group sheets. One dated their marriage 7 Mar 1827. Another had 26 Feb 1827. Consulting the Parish Registers of Llansawel, Carmarthenshire, Wales, I found:

Thomas Jones of this Parish, Bachelor (farmer) and Ruth Thomas of this Parish, Spinster, were married in this Church by Banns this Seventh Day of March in the Year One thousand eight

hundred and Twenty Seven. By me Wm. Morgan, vicar. This Marriage was solemnized between us [signed] Thomas Jones, The Mark of Ruth Thomas. In the Presence of Evan Jones (Abercrymlyn), John Evans (Cilwenmaes). No. 104.

So, please correct your charts. The correct date for the marriage of Thomas Jones and Ruth Thomas is 7 Mar 1827, Llansawel, Carmarthenshire, Wales.

#### Daniel Williams and William Williams

I was pleased to fill some gaps in the families of Daniel Williams and William Williams, sons of Roderick Williams & Elizabeth Evans. This is where I found the most documentation, but I will save it for upcoming reports.

#### Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter

I had hoped to discover more about these uncles of John Jones Williams. In my last report I gave some detail about Rees Davies and his wife Ann Jones, one of whom may have been a child of either Roderick Williams or Elizabeth Evans. I found several other people named Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter, but I wasn't able to find any connection to our Williams family. These uncles seemed to hold a lot of promise for research purposes, but so far they have been elusive.

#### Roderick Williams & Elizabeth Evans

At the National Library of Wales, I found only one new fact about Roderick Williams. But it's a good little fact, and I'm proud to have discovered it. A man named Thomas Evan Bowen of Llandeilo'r-fân parish signed his Last Will and Testament on 17 December 1763. In it he said:

... I Give and bequeath unto Mary Bowen my Beloved wife forty Pounds, thirty Pounds being due to me from **Roderike William of Ceven Gwynne** and ten Pounds being due unto me from David Jones mercer of Builth, and one Cow and be[d]stead and bed cloath....

This document places Roderick Williams at Cefn-gwyn farm in 1763. But is this the same Roderick Williams who married Elizabeth Evans fourteen years later? Good question. Here are all the records I've noticed mentioning the name Roderick Williams in Llandeilo'r-fân:

- (1) Rodrick William witnessed the will of David Havard on 11 Jan 1723.
- (2) Roderick William was buried 2 Apr 1746.
- (3) Roderick, son of William Prytherch, was christened 26 Aug 1750.
- (4) ~~Roderick Williams, yeoman, and Elinor Jeffreys got a marriage bond on 3 Dec 1753.~~
- (5) Roderick William and David Powel served as church wardens in 1761 and 1762.
- (6) Roderike William of Cefn-gwyn owed thirty pounds to Thomas Evan Bowen in 1763.
- (7) Rodk. Willms. married Eliza. Evans on 28 Feb 1778
- (8) Rodrik Wms. had a son named William, christened on 21 Mar 1779.
- (9) Rodrick Williams was buried 11 Jan 1805.
- (10) Rodrick, son of Daniel Williams, was christened 26 Jan 1806.
- (11) Roderick, son of William & Anne Williams, was born 1 Feb 1811.
- (12) Roderick, son of John & Elinor Williams, was christened 23 Jun 1824.
- (13) Roderick, son of William & Elizabeth Williams, was born about 1837.

These thirteen facts are scattered pieces of a large jigsaw puzzle. If all the pieces were available, we could put them together to form a solid picture. Unfortunately, we have only a fraction of the pieces. Some pieces snap together with reasonable certainty. Others fit with various degrees of probability.

This much is certain: Numbers 7 and 8 are definitely my ancestor. My great-great-great-great-grandfather Roderick Williams married Elizabeth Evans on 28 Feb 1778 and his first son was William Williams, christened 21 Mar 1779. Numbers 10 and 11 are definitely grandsons of Roderick Williams and Elizabeth Evans.

Numbers 12 and 13 may be related, but until I conduct further research, I don't know how.

Number 9 is most likely my ancestor. I'm confident enough to write on my charts that my ancestor Roderick Williams was buried 11 Jan 1805.

Numbers 1 and 2 are probably the same person. This Roderick William who died in 1746, could be the grandfather of my ancestor Roderick Williams.

Number 3 has created a stir among some genealogists, who claim that the son of William Prytherch born in 1750 was the same Roderick Williams who married Elizabeth Evans in 1778. I give this suggestion a skeptical frown. I see no evidence for the connection. I think it more likely that the son of William Prytherch was a cousin of my ancestor, maybe a first cousin once removed.

Number 4 is probably an error. The Bishop's Transcripts say that Roderick *Powel* married Elinor Jeffreys on 21 Dec 1753; that Ann, daughter of Roderick *Powel*, was christened 29 Sep 1754; that Elizabeth, daughter of Roderick *Powel*, was christened 27 Jun 1760; and that Roderick *Powel* and David Powel were church wardens in 1760.

Numbers 5 and 6 are probably the same person. Though I wish there were more direct evidence, I believe that the Roderick Williams who served as church warden in 1761 and 1762, and who lived at Cefn-gwyn farm and owed Thomas Evan Bowen thirty pounds in 1763, is my ancestor. The supporting evidence is circumstantial:

Cefn-gwyn farm is only about one and a quarter miles north-northwest of Drain-duon farm, where William Williams (son of my ancestor Roderick) settled, and about one and a third miles east of Bryn-melyn, where Daniel Williams (son of my ancestor Roderick) settled. It appears that the apples didn't fall far from the tree.

More persuasive is the probability that my ancestor Roderick Williams married Elizabeth Evans after he had passed the prime of his youth. My ancestor Elizabeth Evans is almost certainly the same person as Elizabeth Williams of Drain-duon farm who was buried 28 Aug 1832 at the age of 93. She was born, then, about 1739. Today, a person must be at least twenty-one years old serve as church warden. Assuming that the same age requirement existed in 1761, Roderick Williams had to have been born before 1740. This dovetails neatly with the 1739 birth of Elizabeth Evans Williams.

Although the evidence that Roderick Williams was born before 1740 is circumstantial, it beats the prior theories which were completely devoid of evidence. I discard the suggestion that my ancestor was christened 26 Aug 1750 in Llandeilo'r-fân, son of William Prytherch. I also discard the suggestion that my ancestor was christened 26 Sep 1742 in Llanfihangel Abergwesyn.

Dismissing these theories, I am free to explore other clues:

First, there is the custom of naming children. Welsh parents commonly, but not always, named their first son after the paternal grandfather. (For example, William Williams and Daniel Williams each named his first son Roderick.) Roderick Williams and Elizabeth Evans named their first son William. Therefore, the father of Roderick Williams could have been named William.

My ancestor Roderick Williams could have been a grandson of Roderick Williams who was buried 2 Apr 1746 in Llandeilo'r-fân. The missing link could be William Roderick who was buried 18 Feb 1785, or William Williams who was buried 12 Mar 1777.

In 1886 John Jones Williams claimed to be a grandson of William Williams and a great-grandson of Roderick Williams. This claim is mistaken. We know that John Jones Williams was a grandson of Roderick Williams. However, where did he get the name William Williams? If John Jones Williams made the simple mistake of switching the names of his grandfather and great-grandfather, William Williams would be the name of his great-grandfather.

Considering these clues, I will keep my eyes open for a father of Roderick Williams who:

- (1) was most likely born before 1720;
- (2) may be named William;
- (3) may be named William Williams; and
- (4) may be connected to Cefn-gwyn farm in Llandeilo'r-fân.

### Conclusion

Though my recent trip to Wales failed to reveal any new ancestors, I consider it a success. I

gathered a stack of information about the people of Llandeilo'r-fân parish. I filled out some details about my known relatives, especially the families of Daniel Williams and his brother William Williams. I discovered where Roderick Williams lived in 1763. I refined my search for the father of Roderick Williams. As I continue to sharpen the focus, I hope to see an increasingly clearer picture of my Welsh family history.

## NOTES

In case they come in handy for future research, here are the people I found with the names Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter:

### Llandeilo'r-fân Parish:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Rees Walter married Ann Prees 2 Jun 1756.            | Too early.    |
| Ann, daughter of Rees Walter, christened 4 Jul 1756. | Too early.    |
| Rees, son of Evan Walter, christened 7 Dec 1793.     | Getting late. |

### Llanfihangel Nant Bran Parish:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Rees, son of David Prees, baptized 1752. | Too early.    |
| Rees, son of David Prees, baptized 1755. | Too early.    |
| Walter Williams baptized 31 Jan 1790.    | Getting late. |

### Llanfair-ar-y-bryn Parish:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Rees, son of David Rees & Mary, christened 1760.               | Possible.    |
| Roderick, son of William Walter & Ann, christened 30 Oct 1763. | Interesting! |
| William, son of William Walter & Margaret, christened 1777.    | Interesting. |
| Rees, son of Thomas David & Mary, christened 1777.             | Possible.    |
| Rees, son of David Rees & Elizabeth, christened 1779.          | Possible.    |
| Walter, son of William Walter & Margaret, christened 1780.     | Interesting. |

### Aberysgir Parish:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| William Walter married Margaret Price 19 Jul 1780. | Interesting. |
|--|--------------|

### Llandulas (aka Tirabad or Newchurch) Parish:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Rees Davies, wid. married Anne Evans 23 Feb 1767.  | Too early. |
| Rees Davies married Elizabeth William 20 Apr 1768. | Too early. |

It's possible that Rees Davies, William Walter and Rees Walter lived in Llandulas Parish. Unfortunately, Both the Parish Registers and the Bishop's Transcripts from the eighteenth century are missing.

The will of Thomas Evan Bowen is filed at BR/1773/30, National Library of Wales. He left property to Mary Bowen his wife; Margaret Bowen his daughter; Morgan Thomas, Thomas Thomas, Gwalter Thomas, and Margaret Thomas, children of Thomas Morgan of Pentre Gwynne; Mary the wife of David Powell; Sibil the wife of William Philip; Thomas Bowen his son; William Bowen his son; David Bowen; and his three sons Thomas, William, and Edward.

The will of David Havard is filed at BR/1723/58, National Library of Wales.

Much of the information in this report comes from the Bishop's Transcripts of Llandeilo'r-fân available at the National Library of Wales and the LDS Family History Library (FHL 104,471 item 4), the Parish Registers of Llandeilo'r-fân at the National Library of Wales, and Census records available at the National Library of Wales and the LDS Family History Library.

The 1753 marriage bond of Roderick Williams and Elinor Jeffreys comes from the Catalog at the National Library of Wales. Either the catalog or the bond itself appears to be mistaken; the Bishop's Transcripts repeatedly call him Roderick Powel.

See the notes to prior reports for the 1886 list of relatives of John Jones Williams (Logan Temple records, Baptisms for the Dead, #15836, FHL 177,843).

Thanks to Celia and Gareth Morgan. Thanks also to Richard Northcutt for his generous help and contribution.

© May 26, 2008

Kyle D Williams  
215 W. High St.  
Woodbury, TN 37190  
(615) 464-7558  
liberty@hotcom.net