

NORTH WEST WALES DENDROCHRONOLOGYPROJECT

DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES

VAENOL OLD HALL,

Pentir, Near Bangor, Gwynedd

During the medieval period the Bishop of Bangor owned the land now called Vaynol Park, which with the area where the two manor houses now lie was in an area called Farchwel. (A Short History of Vaynol)

C14th ref.in Carnarfon court rolls to William de Hauton commissioning a cellar to be built at his house "at Vaynol" (might be Maenol Bangor)
(K Withersby Lench, The Origins of the Faenol Estate: A rumbustious tale, 2010.p 23)

William ap Gruffydd, of Penrhyn, Sheriff for life, co Carnarvon, 1485-1500. He brought a troop of horse to Bosworth to assist Henry VII against Richard III
He married Angharad, d of Dafydd ap Ifan ap Einion, Constable of Harlech Castle 1461; the gallant defender of the castle during the Wars of the Roses; will dated May 9 1546. (J Griffith, Pedigrees, p 186)

(son) **William Williams**, of Cochwillan, will dated 22 June 1588; proved 3 June 1589 married Lowry, d of Henry Salesbury, of Llanrhaiadr, younger son of Thomas Salesbury, of Llyweni.
They had: (Pedigrees p 186)

1. William Williams, Cochwillan, will proved 1610
2. Robert Williams alias Wynn of Conwy, will proved 1550
3. **Thomas Williams of Vaenol, will proved 1592**
4. Capt Edward Williams of Maes y Castell, living 1601
5. John Williams of Bollew
6. Henry Williams of Llangoed, alias Henry Wynn of Penmon
7. Elin
8. Grace
9. Ann
10. Margaret.

Comment [k1]: This spelling is not contemporary with 1592 - would have been Vaynol or Vaynoll

1558 inherited by (son) **Thomas Williams**, of Vaenol who married **Jane**, d of Sir William Stanley, Kt, of Hooton, Cheshire who died 25 May 1579. (Pedigrees p 190)

1580's Wm Stanley (Thomas' father-in-law) involved in the Babington Plot. (Lench p.16)

1630 Wm Stanley died, exiled for Catholic tendencies, in the Low Countries (Lench p.16)

They had:

1. Sir **William Williams**, Bart, created 15 June 1622, will proved 20 May 1630; he married 1. Ellen, d of William Williams, of Cochwillan. He was her uncle (Pedigrees 190, 186) She died c1600 (Lench p8)
2. Simon Williams of Wig
3. Elin married Lewis Owen Meyrick, of Frondeg, Llangaffo; widowed by 1592. (Lench p 18)
4. Catherine married William Glynne of Plas Newydd (Ped p266)

1554 Sale of land & mill at Maes y Bont, in Maenol Bangor to Thomas Williams, alias Thomas ap Williams ap William. (Lench p 17)

1558 His uncle Thomas Gethin, LL.D., living 1556, left his lands in Bangor to Thomas Wynn ap William, of Vaenol. (Pedigrees p186, Lench p 15)

1558 – 1603 Queen Elizabeth

1559 Act of supremacy

Earlier 1500s: considerable amounts of land had been sold off by the Bangor bishopric from within the bishopric home manor “Maenol Bangor”. (Lench p 17)

1560’s One Hugh Bangor’s family’s C16 hold on lands centred on the medieval townships of Aberpwl & Farchwell loosened. (Lench p.17)

Winter 1557/8 & summer 1562: Dendro dates from the hall range

1557, 1551 & 1536 Principal rafters

1161 Lower purlin

(Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory report)

1558-62 dendrochronology dating of Old Hall range roof timbers; photo of roof timbers assigned to this date. Ref. to provincial building styles. (Lench p15, 23, 24, 25)

Maybe this was a new house, or one on a former house site, built when Thomas Williams inherited Vaynol and in preparation of his marriage to Jane Stanley.

“ Lavish version of Snowdonia plan-type with projecting oriel, porch & later kitchen (?1660s) giving a busy front elevation. House has a contemporary rear parlour wing.

Service rooms were in basement under the hall.

Hall has a lateral chimney, framed ceiling, 16 panels; broad chamfered beams with curved stops with a torus. (Richard Sugett, RCAHMW)

1572 Thos. Wms recorded as having fishing rights on Menai Straits (Lench p17)

1579 Jane Williams ejus uxor obiit May 25th (v.supra) (nee Stanley) (Lench p 18, 32)

1580s Her Majesty’s Crown Fermor in the manor of Dinorwic. (Lench p19)

1587 Thos Wms took his cousins Maurice & Rowland Gruffydd, Plas Newydd to court (Lench p 21)

1588 Lewis Dwnn visited (Dwnn, II, pp 168-9)

1592 preamble to Tho. Wms’ will (date written in full in letters) (Lench p.29, 126)

Thomas Williams, of Vaenol, died 27 May 1592; will proved 1592 (Pedigrees p 190)

1592 Thomas Williams obiit May 27th (Tomb panel v.supra) (Lench p.32)

1721 tomb of Thomas & Jane Williams seen in Bangor Cathedral. (Lench p.31)

1809 tomb also seen by Edmund Hyde hall. (Lench p 32)

1592 inherited by **Sir William Williams**, Bart, created 15 June 1622, will 7 May 1625; proved 20 May 1630; he married 1. Ellen, d of William Williams, of Cochwillan. He was her uncle (Pedigrees 190, 186) She died c1600 (Lench p8)

They had: (Pedigrees p 190)

1. **Thomas (1586 – 1636)** (Lench p 37)

2. Henry of Maes y Castell. Died 1658 (Lench p 43) 1582 date stone at Maes-y-Castell (Lench p.42)

3. Jane

4. Grace

5. Elizabeth

1596 date stone on St. Mary’s Chapel (Lench p 37)

1598 - 1605 William Williams’s 2nd marriage to Dorothy Dimock, of Hanmer, relict of Robert Wynn of Conwy. They had Margaret & Ellen, named in his will. (Pedigrees p 190, Lench p 37 131)

1605 date stone over door to Great Barn Faenol with W & D Williams (Lench p.38)
 1660's extension to Great Barn (Lench p.39)
 1620s Poor weather & famines led to reduction in rent (Lench p 35)
 1620s W Willams of Vaynol & others were challenged in court for quarrying for millstones & slatestones.(Lench p36)
 1620 Dorothy of Vaynol & oath of allegiance (Lench p.43)
 1622 Wm Williams bought baronetcy (Lench p.44)
 2001 parlour furnished in old style for a TV production (Lench p.47)
 2001 bedroom " " " " (Lench p.48)
 1624 death of Dame Dorothy (Lench p.49)
 1625 May: William made his will; he died.
 1626 ref to death of Sir William. (Lench p.52)
 1630 will proved. Baronetcy passed to Thomas, eldest son by 1st wife. (Lench p52)

1625/30 inherited by Thomas Williams

c1610 marriage of Thomas Williams, Bart. to Catherine, d of Robert Wynn of Conwy (1578-1639).
 They had: (Pedigrees p 190)

1. Sir William Williams
2. Thomas Williams of Dinas, H.S.C. 1646. In 1645 married Jane, d & co heiress of Griffith Jones of Castellmarch (Pedigrees p 191)
3. Magdalen (1611-?) in 1634 became 2nd wife of Lewis Anwyl of Park (1596-?) no children

1620's & 30's watchmaking in Geneva (Lench p 59)

Comment [k2]: Don't include this out of context of the book!!!

1625 Thomas Williams H.S.C.

1627 lawsuit over Robert Williams Wynn's will (Lench p 52)

1628/9 Dendrochronology dating for mid rear range; outer room altered for a store; rear wing added. (ODL report) This was soon after Thomas Williams inherited.

1630 conclusion of lawsuits by decree of Court of Chancery (Lench p 52)

1631 Thomas Trafford made Receiver General (Lench p.54)

Comment [k3]: Again, out of context there is no point in including this fact

1633 date stone on Old Hall garden gateway - Sir Thomas & Lady Katherine (Lench p 54)

1633 date stone in porch wall of Plas Dinorwic (19C) (Lench p.56)

1634 walled garden

1634 Marriage of Magdalen (Katherine's daughter) to Lewis Anwyl (Lench p.57)

Further extensions before death. (oak staircase + another room at each level) (Lench p.50)

1636 Death of Sir Thomas Williams (Lench p58, 59)

1636 Nov 14, death of Thomas Williams aged 51. (Pedigrees p 190)

1639 Nov 14 Catherine Williams died at Prysgol, aged 51/52, buried Bangor (Lench p 134)

1636 inherited by William Williams, 3rd Bart, HSC1639, 1654.

1636 Sir William returned to Vaynol from France (Lench p59)

1638 1628/9 alterations carry a graffiti date of 1638. (Building recording) Maybe this was in preparation of the marriage of 1640.

1640 Marriage of Sir William to 1. Margaret Jones, d & co heiress of Griffith Jones, of Castellmarch; she died June 1647 (Pedigrees p 190, Lench pp 59-60, 66)

They had: **Sir Griffith Williams**, Bart. (Pedigrees p190)

1640's Faenol estate had increased in size (Lench p 68)

Comment [k4]: For consistency perhaps you should stick to Vaynol or Faenol throughout?

1642 Archbishop John Williams referred to social life at Vaynol; Christmas feasts at Faenol; satirical drawing of Archbishop John Williams (Lench p.62, 65, 66)

1642 Civil War spread throughout Wales (Lench p.63)

" Sir William included in Charles I's Commission of Array (Lench p 63)

" Repeated requests from Charles I for men, money & arms. (Lench p 63)

1642 Sir William & Griffith Williams both on King's Commission of Array (Lench p 66)

1644 Sir William & the Sheriff appointed to raise horse & foot (Lench p 64)

1646 Parliamentarians in Caernarfonshire (Lench p 64)
 1646 Spring Royalist Lord Byron raising money in C'fonshire (Lench p 64)
 1646 Sir William with Parliamentarians who laid siege to C'fon castle. (Lench p 66)
 1647 Sir William pardoned by Parliamentarians for Royalist sympathies (Lench p 66)
 1648 Few Parliamentarian gentry in Caernarfonshire (Lench p 67)
 1647 Sir William condemned by Carter for secret support of Royalists (Lench p 67)
 1648 Sir William fought with Royalists at battle of Y Dalar Hir (Lench p 67)
 1647 Death of Sir William's 1st wife Margaret Jones (Lench p 68)
 1652 Sir William Williams married 2. Margaret, d of Robert Wynn, of Melai. No children. She lived at Prysgol after her husband's death in 1658 & was buried at Llanwnda in 1698. (Pedigrees p 190)
 1654 Sir William: High Sheriff under Cromwell (Lench p 67)
 1658 Death of Sir William; detailed will (Lench p 67,135)

Sir Griffith Williams, Bart. (c1671– 1669)

1666 Married Penelope, d of Thomas, Lord Bulkeley of Baron Hill. (She 2nd married Col Hugh Wynn, Bodygallen.) (Lench p142)
 They had: (Pedigrees p 190)

1. Sir Thomas Williams, died young
 2. Sir William Williams, Bart, died 23 Dec 1696
 1669 death of Sir Griffith Williams, 1669 Inventory (Lench p 107)
 (His widow Penelope 2nd married Col Hugh Wynn, Bodygallen.) (Lench p142)
 1671 Sept Parts of Faenol was let to Ellis Yonge, of Bryn Iorkin, Flintshire. (Lench p76-7)
 1673 Penelope died. (Lench p 74)

Sir William Williams, Bart, MP for Carnavon 1689, 1690, 1895; (c1675- died 23 Dec 1696)

c1685 He married Ellen, d of Robert, Lord Viscount Bulkeley of Baron Hill, (c1668 -10 Sept 1729, aged 61; buried at Llanwnda. No children.
 1688 J.P. & Deputy Lieutenant of Carnarvonshire. (Lench p 81)
 1688 Oct appointed vice-admiral of Wales (Lench p81)
 1689 Sir William Williams gained the county seat (of Carnarfon) (Lench p80)
 1690 1695 Tory MP for Carvonfon (Lench p 81)
 1695 will (Lench p 148)
 1696 commissioned a sea chart of the Menai Strait. (Lench p 81)
 1696 Dec 23 death of the last Baronet of the line, Sir William Williams, in London aged c 30, possibly from wounds from a duel.

1697 Jan: William White was employed to oversee the estate for the executors of the will & resided at Vaenol. (Lench p86)
 1697 April Forcible entry by Arthur Owen of Orielton, Pembrokeshire & Bodeon, Anglesey M.P. & pretender to the heir at law of the Vaynol estate & eviction of William White. (Lench p 87-91)
 1697 Dec Arthur Owen was ejected, but forcibly returned in Jan 1698.
 In Feb 1698 Parliament agreed that the Wrey family had right of possession. (Lench p 91-92)

Sir William Williams had bequeathed his property & estates to **Sir Bouchier Wrey**, then of Tavistock, Devon, Baronet, for his natural life; with remainder to his son Bouchier Wrey for his natural life;
 with remainder to Chichester Wrey, second son of Bouchier Wrey, for his natural life;
 with remainder to his Majesty King William III, his heirs etc for ever.
 The Wrey family employed an agent to run the farm & estate. (Lench p 93)

1698 March, letters patent, the crown granted the manors of Vaynol & Dinorwic & all other estates
.... to **John Gore**. (Pedigrees p 368)

1699 Feb 9 Deed poll: John Gore declared that the land had been granted to him in trust for **John
Smith, of Tedworth**, Southampton, Esquire & his heirs. John Gore confirmed the same in 1720.
(Pedigrees p 368)

It was left to Thomas Smith, heir of **John Smith I**, but he died without issue & Vaynol went to his
brother, **John Smith II** (Speaker of the House of Commons c1703) (Pedigrees p 368)

who left Vaynol to his son **Capt William Smith**. H.S.C. 1739; H.S.A 1769-70 Died without issue.
1725 report (Lench p93)

In his 1764 will William Smith devised the state to **Thomas Assheton**, son of his sister Harriet,
who by Act of Parliament took the name **Smith**; he was Lord-Lieutenant of Carnarvonshire MP for
the county for many years. (Pedigrees p 368)

1756 The Assheton Smith family came into possession of the Vaynol estate. (A Short History
of Vaynol)

His son **Thomas Assheton-Smith (1752-1828)** married & had eight children. (Pedigrees p 368)

1774 Inherited Vaynol

1770 survey & 1777 map based on 1777 survey. (Lench p.33, 37,
93)

1793 Vaynol New Hall designed by James Defferd of Bangor (Pevsner, Gwynedd p 373)
1795 NEW VILLA completed (Lench p94)

TENANTS of the Old Hall:

1785-1792 Mr William Jones, estate under manager was tenant. (Lench p 94)

1792-c1808 William Lloyd under manager (d 1808) & Eleanor & 7 children. (Lench p 94)

1808 Their son Morgan Lloyd farmed there to 1830. (Lench p 94)

CHECK Land Tax Assessments

Thomas Assheton-Smith (1776-1858), the celebrated fox hunter, married in 1827; no children are
recorded. He devised to his wife and she devised the Welsh Estates to George William Duff, eldest
son of Mrs Duff, daughter of Mrs Astley, a sister of her husband. (Pedigrees p 368)

He inherited in 1828. In 1831 "Tom" Smith revamped the Old Hall, re-roofing it, modernising,
panelling (Lench p95-6)

New tenant: the retiring cook from the new Faenol Hall, Betty Hughes & her husband. (Lench p96)

1831 storm caused the walled garden wall to collapse (Lench p97)

Edward Roberts, wife & daughter. Wife died, & he arranged for his sister's son, Ellis James, farmer
in Llanberis, take over the farm & bring up his daughter. Mr Roberts died in 1840. (Lench p 97)

Comment [k5]: Of the Old Hall

Comment [k6]: Old Hall walled garden

1841 census: detail for the old hall

Ellis James, aged 26, + 7 agricultural labourers & 3 female servants. (Lench p97)

1846: became secretary of the Arfon Methodist Monthly meetings. (Lench p98-101)

1850 Ellis James married Jane Griffith, Ederm, Penllyn.

1851 census: details

They had Catherine in 1852 and Robert in 1856. They were still there at the 1861 census. (Lench
p97-98)

In 1859 **George William Duff** (1848-1904) assumed the name Assheton-Smith & succeeded to the
estate in 1869 on attaining 21 years of age. H.S.A 1848, H.S.C. 1878. He married in 1888 & had a
daughter. (Pedigrees p 368)

1861 census: details

In 1869 Ellis James & family were asked to leave Vaynol Old Hall and move to Ty'n Llwyn, Pentir.

1871 Census: details for the old hall

By 1871 A Scotsman, John Reed, a career farm steward & his wife Susannah, from Norfolk. (Lench p 101)

1881 Census: details for the old hall

By 1881 James & Caroline Kent, & Benjamin their 20 year old son lived at the Old Hall.

1891 Census details for the old hall

By 1891 William Lort, his children, butler, cook & housekeeper lived at Vaynol Old Hall.
After William Lort died, his son, Thomas Lort, became the estate agent.

1901 census details for the old hall:

1905 The Lorts held a big sale of their possessions from the Old Hall before they moved. (Lench p100-104)

In 1905 his brother, **Sir Charles Garden Duff** (1851-post 1913) J.P., D. L., H.S.A. 1885; assumed the name Assheton Smith instead of Duff & succeeded to the estate. He was H.S.C. 1908; & was created a baronet 1911. He married 1. in 1876 Hon Maud Frances (1845-1893) one son; 1894 Mary Elizabeth, no children; he married in 1902 3. Sybil Mary (Pedigrees p 368)
Edwardian: Old Hall garden designed by Lady Sybil Assheton Smith (Lench p56)

1910 Land Tax Assessment

1911 census details for the old hall

His son, Robert (**Robin**) **George Vivian Duff (Assheton Smith)**, Lieut, 2nd Life Guards, (1876-?)
in 1930 married & they had a daughter. (Pedigrees p 368)

1934 RCAHMW plan; account revised 28 November 1956, (Caernarvonshire Inventory, Vol II, monument 1387 (a), RCAHMW)

In the 1900s the Old Hall was home to a variety of farm managers & estate staff, including in the 1960s, Rachel Williams & the late David Gladstone & his family. (Lench p 105)

1952 February 22: Vaynol Old Hall listed Grade 1 by Cadw. Amended 1997 Sept 22.

His son, **Sir Michael Duff Assheton Smith** died in 1980.

1984 Death duties forced his son **Andrew Duff Tennant** to sell Vaynol Park at auction. The majority of the lots were bought by **Glan Gwna Estates Ltd**, a family business from Caernarfon. Mr & Mrs Jones remain the current owners. (A Short History of Vaynol)

They have extensively restored the Old Hall and it is again a family home.

Notes taken from K Withersby Lench, The Origins of the Faenol Estate: A rumbustious tale, 2010. Summary undertaken by Mary Dodd & Margaret Dunn; revised by K Lench Sept 2011

Final revision by Tom David, July 2012