

WILLIAMS.

Mr. A.J.L. Alden,  
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14 February 2001

Dear Mr. Alden,

It was nice to have a short chat with you following your talk to the members of the Glamorgan FHS at Cardiff last week. As you said you are always pleased to receive items concerning the history of Cowbridge I offer the following in case they may be of any interest – though you may of course already have the information.

1. Cowbridge Grammar School : John Bruce Pryce, who was born at Llanblethian (23/7/1784) and was father of Henry Austin Bruce, the first Lord Aberdare, was educated at the Cowbridge school before going on to Oxford University. He was born John Bruce Knight but took the Bruce surname on inheriting the Dyffryn estate under the terms of the will of his uncle the Rev. Thomas Bruce, later again changing it to Pryce in 1837 upon also inheriting the Dyffryn St. Nicholas estate from his cousin.

At least one of his sons, William (born 1816), also went to school at Cowbridge. His father's diary mentions him returning from the school on 13 April 1827 for the Easter holidays and on 22 December that year for Christmas. I have not checked up on the other sons, including H.E.Bruce, but imagine that some or all of them may also have attended Cowbridge Grammar. I wonder if the school's pupil lists for that period survive and if so can tell us?

2. Sir Leoline Jenkins : As you probably know, he was educated at the Cowbridge school and in his will made provision for it. I also seem to remember seeing somewhere that among his bequests he left a small sum of money to two persons named Williams, but do not know whether these were relatives of his or not. Any ideas? Another item, a story I was told some years ago by the then occupier of Llwyn Draen cottage, Ystradowen, had it that he cut his sister out of his will because, it was alleged, of her elopement from Ash Hall to Llwyn Draen to marry a man (again, named Williams!). I wonder if you know anything further about this?
3. Edward Williams (Iolo Morgannwg) : At the FHS meeting in Cardiff someone in the audience asked if anyone knew anything about Iolo's ancestry, and I wonder if you have any details of this? Someone once told me that the family was related to that of David Williams of Ynyscynon, Aberdare, (Alaw Goch), whether directly or by marriage I don't know and I have been unable to find out anything further. If you have any information regarding either of these two queries I would be grateful for it if it is not troubling you too much.

In case it is of any interest to you I enclose separately some notes I have collected on the subject of the parents of the above mentioned Alaw Goch. Details from various sources about David Williams senior are sometimes conflicting, so I was pleased to track down the true facts about his naval service, etc. As you will see, I think he married one Elizabeth Owen, widow, at Llanblethian. However, to date I have not managed to find out anything about her or her first husband.

With best wishes,

*Edward G. Williams*

Edward G. Williams

Parents of David Williams of Ynyscynon (Alaw Goch)

I have some interest in Alaw Goch's family, as his father (born 1775-77?)\* and my great-great-grandfather were brothers, the sons of Thomas William of Llwynwyddog farm, Ystradowen. For some time I have been trying to discover more about Alaw Goch's father, who first name was also David, as you probably know. Various accounts state that in his youth David Williams senior was press-ganged into the Navy. He did indeed serve in the Navy for a time and I have discovered that he was aboard HMS Alexander, a 74-gun ship, at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, as also was one of his brothers, Thomas. The naval records at the Public Record Office reveal that he had joined the ship on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1796, and that whereas his brother Thomas was listed as an Ordinary Seaman, he was entered as a Landsman. This description, implying lack of seafaring experience, may perhaps give some support to the tradition that he had been press-ganged into service, but on the other hand it could merely mean that he had joined as a craftsman, eg as a carpenter, which was his trade later in civil life. The two of them must have been in the navy before 1796, since in November 1795 they had both made allotments of their pay to their mother Jane William 'of Cowbridge' (though her home was at Ystradowen). Some sources claim that David Williams was aboard HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar and witnessed the death of Nelson, but this is erroneous since the ship's muster lists contain no crew member of that name. For the same reason, a similar claim on behalf of another David Williams, of Cardiganshire, must also be false. With the temporary cessation of hostilities that followed the Treaty of Amiens some naval personnel were paid off, among them Thomas Williams on 20 August 1802. It is not recorded when David was released, but it is possible he too was paid off at the same period. He was certainly back home when he married four years afterwards. His wife's first name was Elizabeth, so it seems fairly certain that he was the David Williams of Ystradowen who married one Elizabeth Owen, widow, at Llanblethian on 12 April, 1806.

The couple afterwards lived at Llwyn Draen, a cottage small-holding near Ystradowen rented from the landowner J.F.Gwynne. They are stated to have had three sons, of whom David (the future Alaw Goch), said to have been the eldest, was born on 12 July 1809. The Land Tax records show David Williams senior as the occupant of Llwyn Draen until 1825, after which the family moved to Aberdare, as did his brother William and family.

David subsequently worked as a wood sawyer or carpenter at the Abernant Ironworks, Aberdare, and the family probably lived nearby, possibly in a house on the company's land in the Abernant / Blaenant area. He was left a widower when his wife died on 2 April 1837, and August of that year saw the marriage of his son David to an Aberdare girl, Anne Morgan. The 1841 census records show that he was then living with the young couple at Blaenant, where his son had taken the tenancy of a small farm. Shortly afterwards the latter obtained the tenancy of Ynyscynon farm, Cwmbach, where his father continued to live with him and his family until his death on 14 March, 1857. He and his wife were buried in the graveyard of Ebenezer Independent Chapel, Trecynon, Aberdare.

Very many years later David Jones, of Llanblethian and Wallington, is said to have remarked that David Williams junior (Alaw Goch) 'worked for my father after his marriage for ten shillings a week'. However, one wonders if this can be true (assuming the work was in the Cowbridge area), since Alaw Goch had already been living in Aberdare for some time when he married in 1837. It might seem more likely that it was Alaw Goch's father that was meant, since he was in the Cowbridge area after his marriage in 1806.

\* There seems some uncertainty as to his true year of birth. Statements of his age in census returns and on his gravestone indicate that he was born in 1775, but the church register at Ystradowen records the date of his baptism as 6 February 1778, and since he was the sixth child to be born after the parents' marriage on 30 March 1769, it is possible that he was actually born in 1776 or 1777.

ed was a ynyscynon = 1843,  
late at Deep Llanfrynion or MAD (by 1855) E.G. Williams

helped publish Welsh newspaper of Gwladgarwr  
(The Patriot)

22nd August 2001

Dear Mr Williams,

I have before me your letter of 14th February, and to my disquiet I cannot remember whether or not I have answered it. If I have not done so, then please accept my apologies.

Thank you very much for the information you sent. Unfortunately I cannot add much to your comments; as far as the Grammar School is concerned, there are no pupil lists for the period when the Bruce children could well have attended the school; in fact documentation of that kind about the school, of any period, is very poor.

I have been doing a lot of work on the history of Llanblethian prior to the publication of *Llanblethian Buildings and People* (a companion to the Cowbridge volume). However, my researches have concentrated on the village and not on the very much larger parish, which abuts Ystradowen in the north. So far, I have not come across Elizabeth Owen, who married David Williams at Llanblethian; I feel she is probably from the northern part of the parish.

Re David Jones's note about his father employing Alaw Goch. It is very difficult to read the census enumerator's sheet for the 1851 census, but it looks as if Thomas Jones was aged 66 (It could also be 44, or any combination of the two numbers). If it is 66, then in 1806, the date of the marriage of David Williams, senior, Thomas Jones would only have been 21 - a bit young to be employing anyone at 10/- a week? In 1837, DW jnr's marriage year, TJ could have been a fairly prosperous 52-year old. Perhaps Alaw Goch travelled temporarily to the Vale to find work, before taking up the farm tenancy in Aberdare? All conjecture, I'm afraid. However, I enjoyed reading your account of the Ystradowen family. I wonder if you would consider giving me permission to include it in a future edition of the Local History Society newsletter?

I also include a flyer about a recent book on the Grammar School, which would prove of interest to all Old Boys and to those who knew post-war Cowbridge.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Alden

Mr A.J.L.Alden  
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23 August 2001

Dear Mr Alden,

Thank you for your letter of 22 August, and yes, you did reply to mine of 14<sup>th</sup> February – on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of that month, in fact, and I much appreciated your comments on my several queries. I fear I may have failed to reply with my thanks for these, and if so must offer my sincere apologies; normally I do not often slip up in this way, I hope.

I must also thank you for your recent comments regarding David Jones' claim that Alaw Goch had, after his marriage, worked 'for my father for 10/- a week'. You are obviously quite correct in saying that it could not have been Alaw Goch's father who actually worked for Thomas Jones because if the latter was aged 66 in 1851 he would have been only 21 in 1806 (the year of the marriage of Alaw Goch's father) and thus rather young to be paying such a wage. So it seems the employee must have been Alaw Goch himself, as claimed, and in view of his Ystradowen origins it is not unlikely that he may have worked in the Vale for a time after his own marriage in 1837.

Concerning Elizabeth Owen, the widow whom David Williams, senior, married, I fancy she originally came from one of the nearby Vale parishes rather than Cowbridge or Llanblethian – there are a couple of marriages of men named Owen to females called Elizabeth pre-1800 in Pendoylan and elsewhere, I think, but the problem is discovering which might be the relevant one. Since David Williams and his wife seem to have had only the three sons (assuming there are no daughters recorded) it seems likely that the widowed Elizabeth may have been in her mid-thirties when she married him in 1806. They were living in Aberdare when she died in 1837, after which he lived with their son David (Alaw Goch) until his own death in 1857. He and she were buried in the graveyard of Ebenezer Chapel (Independent); the gravestone inscription, in Welsh and with some words difficult to decipher, translates roughly as follows:-  
*'In remembrance of Elizabeth, wife of Dafydd Williams of this parish who died on (2nd) April 1837. O Lord in Heaven. (I) bid you farewell for a purer life and an existence free from sin. Also of Dafydd Williams her husband who died March 14, 1857, aged 82. Lying side by side in this grave, in time we hope to rise to a better world and perfect peace on this Earth'.*

Thanks for the details about the recent book on Cowbridge Grammar School. Regarding the note I sent you about the Williams family of Ystradowen and the David Williams side in particular, I intend to offer it to the Cynon Valley History Society, of which I am a member, for use if required in one of its occasional publications, but am quite agreeable if you wish to use any of it for your Local History newsletter and hope it may be of some interest to readers. Please feel free to edit or condense it if you want to.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
*Edward Williams*

Edward G. Williams

**WILLIAMS, GWILYM** (1839-1906), judge; b. at Ynyscynon, Aberdare, elder son of David Williams (Alaw Goch) and his wife, Ann, the sister of William Morgan (1819-78), poet (qq.v.). He was educated at Cowbridge grammar school, the Normal College, Swansea, and in France. He became a barrister of the Inner Temple, 1863, and in the same year, on the death of his father, a wealthy landowner, as the proprietor of the Miskin estate with valuable mineral properties.

After an appeal in the House of Commons for bilingual judges he was appointed by the Home Secretary as stipendiary magistrate for Pontypridd and the Rhondda (1872), then a difficult area to administer, with its rapidly-growing population. It was said of him at this time that he was 'a terror to malefactors.' He continued in office until 1884 when he was appointed a judge of the county courts, mid-Wales circuit, to be soon afterwards (1885) promoted to the responsible position of judge of the county courts of Glamorgan in 1885, a post which he held until his death (25 March 1906). He was also chairman of the Glamorgan quarter sessions from 3 July 1894 until death.

Like his father he was an ardent and patriotic Welshman. A great eisteddfodwr, he often presided over enthusiastic gatherings, addressed meetings of Cymmrodorion societies, and delivered lectures (in Welsh and English) to audiences in the industrial districts of South Wales. He was president and adjudicator at the Pontypridd national eisteddfod in 1893 and intervened to order Gwilym Cowlyd (q.v.) off the stage for refusing to agree with the two other adjudicators in deciding the winner of the chair for the best *awdl* (*Gen.*, Oct. 1919). He contributed articles to *Cymru* (O.M.E.) and *Y Geninen*, and published his father's poetical works, edited by Dafydd Morganwg, 1903, as *Gwaith Barddonol Alaw Goch*. He m., 1863, Emma E. (d. 12 Aug. 1922), daughter of William Williams of Aberpergwm, and had three sons and a daughter.

(Sir) Thomas Hughes, *Great Welshmen of Modern Days*, 1931; *Western Mail*, 16 April 1910; Taliesin Morgan, *Hist. of Llantrisant*, 1898; *Asaph*; *Enwogion Aberdâr*, 1910; John Mills, *Hanes Bethania*; O. Morien Morgan, *Hist. of Pontypridd and the Rhondda Valleys*, 1903; *Cymru* (O.M.E.), Feb. 1921; *Gen.* Oct. 1892, Aug. 1900, July 1906, 1907, 1909, and Oct. 1919; J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *Welsh Political and Religious Leaders*.