

During a recent very brief visit to Aberdyfi, Vickie and I met up with a wonderful young lady, 80 year old Margaret Gwenda Williams – aka Gwenda – the widow of my 2nd cousin once removed, Bernard John Phillips Williams. Gwenda was instrumental in sorting out the connection between the Williams family and John Elfyn Jones for which I am eternally grateful. And thank you Mair for putting me in touch with Gwenda.

In Gwenda's possession are a number of letters and 'News Letters' written by John R. Murtaugh who is my 2nd cousin's husband's 2nd cousin once removed. John Murtaugh was researching the history of the Morris family, of which Gwenda is a part. John and Gwenda are 2nd cousins as they are both descendants of James Morris (1838-1908) and Jane Lloyd (1838-1914). Gwenda has very kindly allowed me to borrow these documents and I have been going through them with a fine tooth-comb.

Most of the documents were written in 1996/7 and so we must remember that the World Wide Web was still in its infancy and John didn't have access to the wealth of information we now have. For instance, in an article entitled "Uncle Richard Stayed Home" he mentions that James Morris's father, David Morris, was a Sailor whereas, in fact, he was, according to the 1841 Census, a Tailor!

The Richard in the title of the document was the fourth son of James Morris and Jane Lloyd. The question that prompted the article was whether or not Richard went to America with his brothers. According to Gwenda, Richard wanted to marry a young girl from Llanfihangel y Creuddyn and take her to America. Her father said "No, you aren't going to take my daughter to America". So Richard went to America but was ill when he arrived and was not allowed to enter the country. He had to return to Wales and in the meantime the girl's father had died and so Richard married Margaret Anne Howells on 31 August 1892.

Gwenda's brother, Wyn, suggests that Richard went with his brothers Evan Morris, John Morris and Thomas Morris, along with Evan's brother-in-law Caleb Davies on the trip to America. However, according to the New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957, we can see that Richard Morris and Evan Morris travelled with Evan's brothers-in-law Evan Davies and Caleb Davies and they arrived in New York on 16 April 1888.



If my research is correct, Richard and Evan's brother, John L. Morris, ventured to America four months later and arrived on 4th August 1888.

✖ As for brother Thomas, I have not been able to find any indication that he went to America – or anywhere else. He is certainly present in Wales for all the Census Returns between 1871 and 1911. Neither have I been able to find any record of Richard's return but he obviously did so!

I am very grateful for the research that John Murtaugh has undertaken in his quest to find all of his Morris cousins and I am sure there is a wealth of information that he has gathered over the years. My quest now is to find his living relatives from Portland, Oregon, in the hope that some of the stories and photos that he has been sent are safe and sound somewhere. John was writing a book to be titled "The Morris Story ... From Frongoch Fach to". Did this book ever get finished? Does anyone know where I can obtain a copy?

In Volume 15 of The Morris News Letter, dated February 1999, John mentions that he has bought himself a new computer so with any luck he may have digitised some of his work. Is John still alive? He would be 95 now.

What about his children and grandchildren?

Mary Ann (Murtaugh) Brewer, husband Glenn, children Caroline and Paul.
Susan (Murtaugh) Bradshaw, husband Joseph, children Briand and Scott.
John Jeffery Murtaugh, wife Molly, children Graham and Tate.

I have tried contacting a Tate Murtaugh via Facebook but, so far, have not had a reply. If anyone out there is in touch with any of these people please let me know or ask them to contact me (phil@w-f-t.co.uk).