

**Pascoe Grenfell (1761 – 1838) – Businessman, Member of Parliament for Great Marlow and founder of a Dynasty**



National Portrait Gallery

Pascoe Grenfell was a Whig MP for Great Marlow from 14 December 1802 to 29 February 1820 and for Penryn in Cornwall from 9 March 1820 to 2 June 1826. His involvement with Marlow came through his relationship with the Williams family who at one point dominated the copper industry in Britain and who dominated property and politics in Marlow from 1790 to 1885. Although initially junior to the Williams family, Grenfell became wealthy in his own right and founded a successful business and political dynasty.

Pascoe Grenfell was born in Marazion in Cornwall and was baptised in the local church on 24 September 1761. His father, also Pascoe Grenfell, was a merchant in London and became commissary to the states of Holland. After studying at the grammar school in Truro the younger Pascoe Grenfell joined his father and uncle in business in London.

In 1786 he married his cousin, Charlotte Granville, and had three sons and a daughter. The eldest son Pascoe Granville Grenfell, a second son who died in infancy and a third son, Charles Pascoe Grenfell, born in 1790 shortly before Charlotte's death. After he became established with the Williams family, and purchased Taplow House, in 1798 he married Georgina St Leger, the daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Doneraile with whom he had 13 children before her death in 1818. Georgina and her last daughter, who had died a few months earlier, were the first burials in the Grenfell vault in Old Taplow Churchyard which now contains 25 members of the family and was last used in 1974. Grenfell became estranged from his eldest son although they appear to have been reconciled since he was buried in the Grenfell vault.

As well as his involvement in politics and business, as a Trustee, Pascoe Grenfell also played a significant role in the re-building of the Royal Theatre, Drury Lane.

Pascoe Grenfell had a long life for the time and died at 38 Belgrave Square in London on 23 January 1838 at the age of 76.



Portrait of Georgina St Leger and her son Pascoe St Leger Grenfell – Duke University Library



Taplow House (now a hotel)



Grenfell vault in Old Taplow Churchyard

### **Pascoe Grenfell and the Williams family**

By 1783 he was established as a merchant at Charlotte Row near Mansion-House Street in London and by 1785 he was already closely involved with Thomas Williams. Harris, the biographer of Thomas Williams, describes Grenfell as ‘Williams’ outstanding subordinate’. Nevertheless, although he joined Thomas Williams and his son, Owen Williams, in business, represented them in the sales of their products in continental Europe and became a partner of Owen Williams, Pascoe Grenfell maintained his own independent family business throughout. He also acted as a personal representative for Lord Uxbridge in the councils of the Mona Mines Organisation in a situation where there was potential conflict with the interests of the Williams family.

From 1794 until 1799, Grenfell and Owen Williams formed a partnership to buy Cornish ore outside the normal purchasing system then in place. These purchases supplemented the diminished yield from Anglesey on which Thomas Williams had previously relied and produced about 200 to 300 tons of fine copper per year. To what extent this was a strategy by Thomas Williams to circumvent the normal purchasing processes is less clear. Williams role

in the copper industry was controversial and the focus of a Parliamentary enquiry in 1799 but by then he no longer had the near monopoly power in copper supply he had enjoyed in 1792.

After the death of Thomas Williams in 1802 Pascoe Grenfell continued in partnership with Owen Williams. In 1803 the partnership of Williams and Grenfell bought the works of the Parys Company at Upper Bank, Swansea and probably the Middle Bank works of the Stanley Company at the same time. In 1810 they became the London corresponding house for the Chester Bank. As copper related assets were gradually disposed of, in 1814 Grenfell returned £60,000 to shareholders in the Parys and Stanley Company. By 1825 the Williams family had retired from the copper business but the Grenfell family carried on their involvement in south Wales where they became increasingly important.

Pascoe Grenfell was reportedly a difficult man and although they had been partners for many years he and Owen Williams fell out in 1829 over borrowing Grenfell had made on behalf of their previously joint copper business without consulting him. As a result Williams vowed 'never [to] make up with him'. He also had a long running disagreement with his eldest son Pascoe Granville Grenfell, so that he bequeathed his copper business to his second son Charles Pascoe Grenfell. Since Pascoe Granville was eventually buried in the family vault it seems likely, however, that they were eventually reconciled.

### **Pascoe Grenfell as a Member of Parliament**

After Pascoe Grenfell became principal managing partner of the Williams concerns he purchased Taplow House which gave him a base in this area.

In 1802 Great Marlow had two Members of Parliament, Thomas Williams, a Tory, and Owen Williams, his son, a Whig. There was no secret ballot so the small number of voters were subject to pressure as to how they voted. Since the Williams family owned much of the housing in Great Marlow they were, effectively, able to choose the two MPs. When Thomas Williams died in 1802 Pascoe Grenfell, who stood as a Whig, was elected to replace him unopposed.

Grenfell remained as MP for Great Marlow, along with Owen Williams, until the elections of 1820 when he was replaced by Thomas Peers Williams, the son of Owen Williams, so that at that point Great Marlow was again represented by a Williams father and son. Thomas Peers Williams initially stood as a Whig candidate in 1820 but by 1832, when his father had retired from Parliament, he had switched to the Tory party. At the 1820 election Pascoe Grenfell stood for the Whigs and was elected in Penryn in Cornwall which he represented until 1826.

In Parliament Grenfell spoke with considerable expertise on financial matters and in particular the role of the Bank of England. Due to his efforts the Bank of England was required to publish accounts to all interested parties. In 1816 he published two of the speeches he made in 1814 on financial matters and these are still available to purchase today. He also spoke against the workings of the recently introduced Income Tax. While the copper industry benefitted from the slave trade and his predecessor and business associate, Thomas Williams, voted to maintain the slave trade, Pascoe Grenfell was a close friend of William Wilberforce and a passionate supporter of the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of slaves.

### **The Descendants of Pascoe Grenfell**

Pascoe Grenfell's interest in politics, finance and the Bank of England was shared by a number of his descendants several of whom became Members of Parliament and either the Governor or a Director of the Bank of England. Several of his descendants were elevated to the peerage.

Pascoe Grenfell's son, Charles Pascoe Grenfell (1790 – 1867), became a Liberal Member of Parliament for Preston from 1847 to 1852 and 1857 to 1865, and a Director of the Bank of England from 1830 to 1864. He also became head of the copper business on his father's death.

Pascoe Grenfell's son, Pascoe St Leger Grenfell (1798 – 1879), was a businessman who inherited part of Pascoe Grenfell and Sons after his father's death. After the abolition of slavery in 1833 he claimed compensation for 347 slaves on the island of Jamaica. There is no indication that he owned any slaves directly but rather that he was claiming on behalf of

someone or some organisation as a trustee for the 131 slaves, and that he was a mortgagee owed a debt against which 216 slaves and perhaps a plantation were collateral.

Pascoe Grenfell's daughter, Marianne Grenfell (1802 – 1892), married George Glyn, later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Wolverton, who became the Liberal Member of Parliament for Kendal from 1847 to 1868.

Pascoe Grenfell's daughter, Caroline Temple Grenfell (1809 – 1886), was the third wife of John Ashley Warre who was the Member of Parliament for Lostwithiel from 1812 to 1818, Taunton from 1820 to 1826, Hasting from 1831 to 1834 and Ripon 1857 to 1860. He was a founder member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824 which subsequently received royal patronage from Queen Victoria and in 1840 became the RSPCA.

Pascoe Grenfell's daughter, Frances Eliza Grenfell (1814 – 1891), was a writer who married Charles Kingsley who, among other things, was social reformer and writer. In 1863 he wrote *The Water-Babies, a Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* about a boy chimney sweep. Interestingly Pascoe Grenfell, during his time as an MP had been concerned with legislation in the House of Commons to regulate the activities of chimney sweeps.

His grandson, Charles William Grenfell (1823 – 1861), son of Charles Pascoe Grenfell, became the Liberal Member of Parliament for Sandwich from 1847 to 1852 and for Windsor from 1852 to 1859.

His grandson, Henry Riversdale Grenfell (1824 – 1902), son of Charles Pascoe Grenfell, became a Liberal Member of Parliament for Stoke-upon-Trent from 1862 to 1868 and then Deputy Governor of the Bank of England and eventually Governor of the Bank of England from 1881 to 1883.

His grandson, Field Marshall Francis Wallace Grenfell (1841 – 1925), later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Grenfell, son of Pascoe St Leger Grenfell, was a military man who commanded forces in various battles in Africa and who rose to become Governor of Malta and later Commander in Chief, Ireland. Grenfell Road in London was named after him which in turn gave the now infamous Grenfell Tower its name.

His grandson, Sydney Carr Glyn (1835 – 1916), son of Marianne Grenfell, became a Liberal Member of Parliament for Shaftesbury from 1880 to 1885.

His grandson, Pascoe Charles Glyn (1833 – 1904), son of Marianne Grenfell, became a Liberal Member of Parliament for Dorset East from December 1885 until July 1886.

His grandson, Edward Carr Glyn (1843 – 1928), son of Marianne Grenfell, was somewhat unusual among his descendants and instead of becoming a banker and politician became the Anglican Bishop of Peterborough from 1897 to 1916. As we will see below, however, his son did enter politics and continue the family tradition.

His great grandson, William Henry Grenfell (1855 – 1945), later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Desborough, son of Charles William Grenfell, is probably his most famous descendant. He was an outstanding sportsman and rowed for Oxford in the 1877 and 1878 boat races then went on to become President of the Oxford Boat Club in 1879. In 1906 he won the silver medal for fencing at the Intercalated Games in Athens and in 1908 was the president of the Olympic Games held in London. He was the President of the Amateur Fencing Association, Marylebone Cricket Club and the Lawn Tennis Association. He also enjoyed mountaineering, swimming, fishing and big-game hunting. More locally, he was the first captain of the Maidenhead Rowing Club and a founder member and first President of the Maidenhead Golf Club where he is commemorated to this day with the annual Grenfell Cup.

As a Liberal Member of Parliament he sat for Salisbury from 1880 to 1882 and from 1885 to 1886 and then for Hereford from 1892 to 1893 when he resigned rather than support Gladstone's Second Irish Home Rule Bill. He returned as a Conservative Member of Parliament for High Wycombe from 1900 to 1905 when he was raised to the peerage as 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Desborough. He was also Mayor of Maidenhead in 1895 and 1896. Desborough College in Maidenhead is named after him.

Pascoe Grenfell's great grandson, Edward Charles Grenfell (1870 – 1941), later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron St Just, son of Henry Riversdale Grenfell. He was the Unionist member of Parliament for the City of London from 1922 to 1935 when he was raised to the peerage as 1<sup>st</sup> Baron St Just. He was also a Director of the Bank of England from 1905 to 1940.

His great grandson, Ralph George Campbell Glyn (1884 – 1960), later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Glyn, son of Edward Carr Glyn. He was the Unionist Member of Parliament for Clackmannan and Eastern Stirlingshire from 1918 to 1922 and Conservative Member of Parliament for Abingdon from 1924 to 1953 when he was elevated to the peerage as 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Glyn.

This document was written, May 2022, by Adam Baxter and includes information provided by Janet Smith. Any errors are, however, solely the responsibility of the author.

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