# North Wales police officer cleared of assault after viral arrest video



## Police Officer Cleared of Assault Charges After Viral Video Incident

A North Wales police officer, PC Richard Williams, has been acquitted of assault charges stemming from a high-profile incident in Porthmadog, where footage circulating online showed him repeatedly punching a suspect during an arrest. The jurors at Caernarfon Crown Court found him not guilty of assault causing actual bodily harm and intentional strangulation after considering evidence that gained substantial public and media attention.

The controversy began on 10 May 2023, when officers were called to a domestic disturbance. Video footage captured the moment PC Williams struck Steven Clark whilst the latter was restrained on the ground. With over 500,000 views in a short time, the clip prompted a swift and widespread public outcry, leading to demands from local politicians for an investigation into potential police brutality. Conservative Senedd member Gareth Davies termed it "police brutality" and called for accountability, expressing his shock and concern over the incident's details.

In his defence during the trial, PC Williams argued that his actions were in response to an immediate threat to his female colleague, PC Einir Williams, who had reportedly fallen during the attempt to arrest Clark. He claimed that Clark had "gone towards" his colleague in what appeared to be a "rugby tackle." Describing the chaotic circumstances, PC Williams said he acted out of concern for her safety and believed that Clark was likely under the influence of drugs, which exacerbated the situation.

During the trial, it was highlighted that PC Williams had served for 21 years and asserted that he employed what he termed "distraction strikes" using his weaker arm, aiming to control the suspect rather than inflict harm. Witness testimonies, including those from nearby residents, placed a spotlight on the escalation of the incident, with concerns raised over the aggressive use of force by officers in distressing scenarios.

Footage obtained from neighbour Tammy Humphreys documented the incident's critical moments, capturing pleas from bystanders questioning the officers' use of force. As the aggression unfolded, one shouted, “Stop resisting!” while others expressed shock at the violence exhibited by the officer. Prosecutors argued that PC Williams' actions exceeded reasonable force necessary for the arrest, leading to serious injury sustained by Clark.

Acquittals of police officers involved in contentious incidents have been a recent theme within North Wales. Just a week prior, another officer, PC Ellis Thomas, was found not guilty of grievous bodily harm following allegations of excessive force during a separate arrest. Thomas maintained his innocence, stating that his actions were an attempt to control a suspect without any malicious intent.

In the wake of Williams' acquittal, the North Wales Police Federation expressed relief, heralding the jurors' decisions as vindications for officers faced with high-pressure situations requiring split-second decision-making. However, even with the legal outcomes in favour of the officers, the potential for misconduct proceedings remains a pressing concern. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is continuing its investigations to evaluate the appropriateness of force used by police in both cases.

Given the profound public interest in policing practices, especially regarding the use of force during arrests, the need for transparent investigations and accountability mechanisms within law enforcement agencies remains vital. As discussions about police conduct continue, the implications of such incidents highlight the ongoing struggle between maintaining public safety and the ethical use of force in law enforcement.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68272336)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/11/police-officer-filmed-appearing-to-punch-man-repeatedly-in-head-during-arrest-in-wales)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68272336), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-05-12/watchdog-to-investigate-whether-police-officer-used-reasonable-force-in-arrest)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65576683)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/investigation-use-force-during-arrest-porthmadog)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65576683), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65847074)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-05-12/watchdog-to-investigate-whether-police-officer-used-reasonable-force-in-arrest)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14692359/Police-officer-filmed-restraining-punching-man-not-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68272336> - PC Richard Williams, a North Wales Police officer, has been charged with assaulting Steven Clarke during an arrest in Porthmadog in May 2023. Williams, 42, pleaded not guilty to charges of intentional strangulation and assault causing actual bodily harm. He is scheduled to stand trial in Caernarfon from 16 September. Williams has been suspended by North Wales Police pending the outcome of the trial. The charges relate to the arrest of Clarke, 34, in the garden of a property in Pensyflog, Porthmadog, on 10 May 2023. The incident has attracted significant public interest and concern. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-68272336?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/11/police-officer-filmed-appearing-to-punch-man-repeatedly-in-head-during-arrest-in-wales> - Footage has emerged showing a police officer in Porthmadog, North Wales, appearing to punch a man repeatedly in the head during an arrest. The incident occurred on 10 May 2023, when officers were called to a domestic disturbance. The video, which has been widely shared on social media, shows the male officer pinning the suspect to the ground and appearing to punch him nine times. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has launched an investigation to determine whether the level of force used was reasonable and proportionate. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/11/police-officer-filmed-appearing-to-punch-man-repeatedly-in-head-during-arrest-in-wales?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-05-12/watchdog-to-investigate-whether-police-officer-used-reasonable-force-in-arrest> - The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has announced an independent investigation into the use of force by a police officer during an arrest in Porthmadog, North Wales. The investigation follows the circulation of a video showing a male officer appearing to punch a man repeatedly in the head while restraining him. The IOPC aims to establish whether the level of force used was reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. The incident has raised significant public concern and calls for accountability. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-05-12/watchdog-to-investigate-whether-police-officer-used-reasonable-force-in-arrest?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/investigation-use-force-during-arrest-porthmadog> - The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has initiated an investigation into the use of force during an arrest in Porthmadog, North Wales. The investigation was prompted by a video circulating on social media, showing a police officer appearing to punch a man repeatedly in the head while restraining him. The IOPC is examining whether the level of force used was reasonable and proportionate. The incident has attracted significant public interest and concern. ([policeconduct.gov.uk](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/investigation-use-force-during-arrest-porthmadog?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65576683> - A police officer in Porthmadog, North Wales, has been suspended after a video emerged showing him appearing to punch a man nine times during an arrest. The incident occurred on 10 May 2023, when officers were called to a domestic disturbance. The video, which has been widely shared on social media, shows the male officer pinning the suspect to the ground and appearing to punch him in the face. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has launched an independent investigation into the matter. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65576683?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65847074> - A police officer in Porthmadog, North Wales, is under criminal investigation after a video emerged showing him appearing to punch a man in the head nine times during an arrest. The officer has been served with a gross misconduct notice, and a second officer has also been served with a misconduct notice related to the level of care given to the arrested man. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is examining whether the force used was justifiable, proportionate, and necessary. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65847074?utm_source=openai))