



WILLIAMS, JOHN (1727 - 1798), Dissenting minister, scholar and author

Name: John Williams
Date of birth: 1727
Date of death: 1798
Spouse: Elizabeth Williams (née Dunn)
Spouse: Martha Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: Dissenting minister, scholar and author
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Roger Thomas

Born at Lampeter, Cardiganshire, 25 March 1727. After training for the ministry at Carmarthen Academy under [Evan Davies](#) and [Samuel Thomas](#), he held pastorates at Stamford, Lincs., 1752-5; Wokingham, Berks., 1755-67; and Sydenham, Kent, 1767-95. He was appointed librarian of Dr. Williams's Library in 1777. From the date of his retirement from that position, in 1782, until his death he was one of [Dr. Williams](#)'s trustees. A portrait of him hangs in the Library which he served. He married (1), 1767, Mrs. Martha Still (died 1777), a widow; and (2), 1781, Elizabeth Dunn. He died 15 April 1798.

His chief publications were works of Biblical and linguistic scholarship: (1) *A concordance to the Greek Testament*, 1767, a standard work until superseded by Wigram's concordance; (2) *A free enquiry into the authenticity of the first and second chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel*, published anonymously, 1771 (2nd ed. with author's name and additions, 1789); (3) *Thoughts on the origin, and on the most rational and natural method of teaching the languages*, 1783, which contains a plea for the restoration of Latin as a universal language. He is also credited with the authorship of the anonymous *Critical dissertations on Isaiah*, vii, 13-6, 1768; and he is said to have had ready for the press at the time of his death a translation of *Graeco-barbara Novi Testamenti quae Orienti originem debent*, by M. P. Cheitomaeus 1649. A plea for the release of Dissenters from credal subscription appeared from his pen in 1773 under the title, *A serious and earnest address ...* Perhaps his most famous literary exploit was a defence of the discovery of America by Welshmen in the 12th century under the title of *An enquiry into the truth of the tradition concerning the discovery of America by Prince Madog ab Owen Gwynedd, about the year 1170* , 1791. This was followed by *Further observations*  on the same subject in 1792.

Author

Reverend Roger Thomas, (1980)

Sources

Monthly Magazine, 1798, 388

Cambrian Register (1795-1818), iii, 190

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