

## WILLIAMS, JOHN (Ioan Rhagfyr; 1740 - 1821), musician

**Name:** John Williams  
**Pseudonym:** Ioan Rhagfyr  
**Date of birth:** 1740  
**Date of death:** 1821  
**Spouse:** Jane Williams (née Jones)  
**Parent:** William Robert Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** musician  
**Area of activity:** Education; Music; Poetry  
**Author:** Robert David Griffith

Born 26 December 1740 at Hafoty Bach, parish of Celynnin, Merionethshire, the son of William Robert Williams and his wife, who was related to [Edward Samuel](#), Llangar. The family moved to Tal-y-waun, near Dolgelley. The son learned his father's craft - that of making cloth hats. Wool merchants from Shrewsbury used to lodge at Tal-y-waun and some of these, after observing that John Williams had a gift for teaching, paid for three months' schooling for him at Shrewsbury; he also received lessons in playing the trumpet and the flute. After returning from Shrewsbury he began to write music and poetry. In 1763 he married Jane, daughter of William Jones, Bryn Rhyg, Dolgelley. He relinquished the craft of hat-making in 1772 to become a clerk to Edward Anwyl, solicitor, Dolgelley; he afterwards kept schools at Trawsfynydd, Barmouth, Dolgelley, and Llan-elltyd. John Williams was probably the most prominent musician of his time in Wales. Anthems which he wrote remained popular for a long time, his hymn-tunes 'Sabath,' 'Cemaes,' and 'Dyfroedd Siloah' are found in many collections, whilst instrumental pieces by him (marches, gavottes, and minuets) were published in *Y Cerddor Cymreig* ([Ieuan Gwyllt](#)). In [Foulk Robert Williams](#) (*Eos Llyfnwy*), 'Cerddoriaeth o Gerddi Seion' (in manuscript form in N.L.W.) are preserved fifty-nine hymn-tunes and twenty-one anthems by him. He died 11 March 1821, and was buried in Dolgelley parish churchyard.

### Author

Robert David Griffith, (1877 - 1958)

### Sources

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*Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig* (1889-96)

*Geirlyfr Bywgraffiadol o Enwogion Cymru* (1870)

T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen... from the earliest times to the present* (1908)

Josiah Thomas Jones, [Geiriadur Bywgraffyddol o Enwogion Cymru \(Aberdâr 1867-70\)](#), ii, 645-6

Robert Williams, [Enwogion Cymru. A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Welshmen](#) (1852)

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