

## WILLIAMS, JONATHAN (1752? - 1829), cleric, schoolmaster, and antiquary

**Name:** Jonathan Williams  
**Date of birth:** 1752?  
**Date of death:** 1829  
**Parent:** David Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** cleric, schoolmaster, and antiquary  
**Area of activity:** Education; History and Culture; Religion  
**Author:** Robert Thomas Jenkins

Born at Rhayader, the son of David Williams, draper, of 'Y Siop Goch,' according to *Gwilym Lleyn* (*Brython*, 1861, 163). Three of David Williams's sons became clergymen. According to the pedigree published on p. 400 of the *Hist. of Radnorshire* (1905 ed.), the eldest was JOHN WILLIAMS, if Foster is correct (and there is some reason to suppose that he has mixed up two John Williamses), he did not go to Oxford until 1786, long after his younger brothers - his son, also John Williams (1797 - 1873) had a distinguished career at Oxford, becoming a Fellow and tutor of Christ Church. The youngest of the three brothers was HENRY WILLIAMS (1756 - 1818), a graduate from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1778; he is said to have written the article on Rhayader in Nicholson's guide-book, but this is not acknowledged in the book itself; he left money in trust to the University of Oxford to endow a lectureship (a kind of curacy) of the value of forty-eight pounds a year in Rhayader church. Jonathan Williams was the second son; according to Foster, he was born in 1754, but according to his tombstone, in 1752 or 1753. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1770, and graduated in 1774. He was appointed first master of Leominster grammar school and perpetual curate of Eytton, just outside the town. He got married at Leominster and had two daughters, one of whom became the wife of John Jones, the celebrated lawyer of Cefnfaes (Rhayader). He published the *History of Leominster*. After 1818, he held the lectureship in Rhayader church, which had been endowed by his brother, and this was subsequently held by his nephew, John Williams, referred to above. There has been considerable misunderstanding about the date of his death; Foster, relying on the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1821, ii, gives the date as 24 August 1821, but that was another Jonathan Williams. According to his tombstone at Eytton, he died 19 August 1829, 'aged 77,' and this is supported by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1829, ii, 377, where the death is recorded on the 19 August of 'John' Williams, aged 76 - it is obvious that this was Jonathan, for he is described as schoolmaster of Leominster and curate of Eytton.

Jonathan Williams had intended publishing a book on the history of Radnorshire. The city library at Cardiff possesses letters written by him (1818-21, addressed from Leominster) to W. J. Rees of Casgob, complaining of the difficulty he had in getting manuscripts, and the disappointments which caused him to put aside the work unfinished; but he left a lengthy manuscript on the subject to his married daughter. Parts of the work were published in *Archæologia Cambrensis* (commencing 1855), and appeared as a separate volume in 1859. The history was published in full, with additional matter by Edwin Davies, at Brecon (1905), with a portrait of Jonathan Williams. One would hesitate to call the *History of Radnorshire* one of the best of its kind, but it has its good points, and we must not forget the difficulties and frustrations which prevented the author from completing the work to his own satisfaction.

### Author

**Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins**, (1881 - 1969)

### Sources

Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford*

Edwin Davies's introduction to the 1905 edition of the *A General History of the County of Radnor* (Brecknock 1905)

and the other references given above

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Jonathan Williams](#)

### Additional Links

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