

WOTTON, WILLIAM (1666 - 1727), cleric and scholar

Name: William Wotton
Date of birth: 1666
Date of death: 1727
Gender: Male
Occupation: cleric and scholar
Area of activity: Religion; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Robert Thomas Jenkins

He was not a Welshman, either by descent or, except for a comparatively short period, by residence; accordingly one must be content to refer to the article in the *D.N.B.* (by Norman Moore, the Celtic scholar) on the career of this astonishing man, who read Greek and Latin at the age of 5 and Hebrew at the age of 6, and who was to become the friend of Bentley, Locke, and Newton; he was born in Suffolk 13 August 1666, and died in Essex 13 February 1726/7. He did, however, have some Welsh associations. In 1680 he made the acquaintance of **bishop William Lloyd** of S. Asaph, and from 1691 until his death, held the sinecure living of Llandrillo-yn-Rhos - his residential living being Middleton Keynes near Bletchley, Buckinghamshire. In 1714, owing to financial difficulties, he retired to Wales, where he continued to live for some years, during which time he learned Welsh - he delivered the Welsh sermon to the London Society of Antient Britons on S. Davids Day, 1722. One of his friends was **Moses Williams**, who refers to him in the introduction to his *Cofrestr o'r Holl Lyfrau Printjedig*, 1717, as 'a native-born Englishman, a most learned man, who in the space of two years has become such a master of Welsh that he has already taken in hand the transcription of the *Laws of Hywel Dda*.' Wotton did not live to see his work on the laws in print, but it was published in 1730 by his son-in-law, under the editorship of **Moses Williams**, as *Cyfreithjeu Hywel Dda ac eraill, seu Leges Wallicae* (etc.), comprising the Welsh text, a Latin translation, and notes; this was the first occasion on which the laws were printed. Another friend of Wotton's was Browne Willis, the antiquary (1682 - 1760; for him see the *D.N.B.*), who for three years was his pupil in Middleton Keynes parsonage. Contributions by Wotton are included in Browne Willis's well-known *Surveys* of S. Davids and Llandaff - see his cypher 'M.N.' (= [Willia]m [Wotto]n) on p. 90 of the *St. Davids*, 1716, and his name in full on p. 34 of the *Llandaff* - it is obvious that he had visited both places.

Author

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