



FRONTISPICE of Volume II of the *Icones* in which butterflies considered by Jones to belong to Linnaeus's second major division of *Papilio*, the Heliconii, are depicted. In his organization of the butterfly species within his seven volumes, Jones followed the system Linnaeus established in his 12th edition of *Systema naturae* (1767). Opposite is a silhouette portrait believed to be of William Jones.

INTRODUCTION

William Jones and the birth of the Icones

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That indefatigable and liberal Naturalist the late William Jones, Esq. of Chelsea.
Edward Donovan 1823, *Naturalist's Repository*, Vol. 1, pl. 19 (text)

An excellent entomologist, well known in the scientific world, though, like other men of superior genius, modest and retiring from the observation he so well deserved.
Lady [Pleasance] Smith 1832, *Memoir ... of the late James Edward Smith*, 174



William Jones (1745–1818) was a wealthy London wine merchant, natural historian and scholar who is said to have ‘retired to Chelsea’, where he lived at number 10 Manor Street. According to Thomas Faulkner’s account of Chelsea, published in 1829, Jones’s ‘learning and abilities were of the most superior order; he was eminently skilled in the Hebrew and Greek languages, and possessed a happy talent of poetical composition. But it is in the character of a naturalist that he must be principally regarded.’ Although interested in many fields of enquiry, his special focus was entomology, and butterflies in particular, and he was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London on 15 November 1791, just three years after its foundation. Jones was buried at St Luke’s burial ground, Chelsea, on 8 July 1818.

William Jones’s will, written on 24 July 1816 and proven on 21 July 1818, reveals that he had been married, but his ‘dear wife’, who was not named, had already passed away. As the primary beneficiary was a cousin, John Drewitt, it appears that Jones and his wife had no children. The will also indicates that John was a descendant of John Dawtrey, a brother of William’s grandfather, John Dawtrey of Petworth, Sussex. These and some other clues in the will have been sufficient to establish that William’s parents were William Jones (senior) and Mary Dawtrey, who married at Tillington, a small village just outside Petworth, in May 1734. William, their first-born, was baptized at Petworth the following April. This confirms that William Jones died at the age of 83, as stated by Faulkner in 1829 and also noted in a contemporary London newspaper. The will also reveals specific cash bequests amounting to over £5,000 (more than £500,000 today) and the gift of farmland at South Ambersham (now in West Sussex), all indicative that Jones remained wealthy to the end of his days.

William married Sarah Alderton at Fifehead Magdalen, Dorset, on 14 July 1779. Sarah and William had almost certainly known each other since childhood – she also came from the Petworth area, having been baptized at Tillington on 30 December 1734. The written record of their marriage, which carries their signatures, indicates that Jones was then resident in the City of London. This suggests that the likely earliest date that Jones ‘retired to Chelsea’ would have been about 1780 – when he was some 45 years of age.