

Adams, John Couch (5 June 1819 Lidcot, near Launceston, Cornwall: died 21 January 1892, Cambridge), eldest of the seven children of Thomas Adams (1788–1859), tenant farmer, and his wife, Tabitha Knill Grylls (1796–1866), a farmer's daughter who had received some education from her uncle John Couch. She inherited Couch's library, including a few astronomy books, which engaged John in boyhood.

Remembered, most memorably, for mathematically predicting the existence of the planet, Neptune from perturbations caused by the orbit of Uranus. Although considered a co-discoverer of Neptune today, at the time the discovery it was lost to fellow astronomer Le Verrier, who had independently also predicted the orbit. There has been a lot of written discussion about the controversy surrounding the events which lead to the loss of the discovery and the role that G. B. Airy and J. Chablis played in not working more closely with Adams at the time. Adams own papers do give good insights into the methods used at the time around the discovery. They are available to read online at (archive.org)

<https://archive.org/details/scientificpapers01adamuoft>. Similarly Airy's paper on the events <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1846MNRAS...7..121A>. Work undertaken surrounding the Moon enabled him to prove that the Moon undergoes tidal acceleration a discovery which would earn him a gold medal from the Royal Astronomical society in 1866.

Adams also worked on the Leonid meteor shower and analysed them mathematically to show that they followed an elliptical path through the solar system. The discovery was used later to show the close relationship between meteors and their parent comets. Adams received the Copley medal from the Royal Society in 1848 and was elected a fellow to the society in 1849. He became the president of the Royal Astronomical Society between the years of 1851 – 1853 and 1874- 1876. On Airy's retirement in 1881 Adams was offered the post of Astronomer Royal, which he declined.