Katherine Plymley, ‘Journey to Anglesey’

1792

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The extensive unpublished archive of Katherine Plymley (bap. 1758, d. 1829), which runs to over 200 volumes of diaries, memoirs and study notebooks, includes some 30 volumes of travel writing. The tour of north Wales reproduced here, in which Plymley travelled from Shropshire to Anglesey and back in 1792 in the company of her brother and sister, belongs to the earlier part of her archive. The Plymleys, who lived in Longnor, south of Shrewsbury, were part of the Shropshire Enlightenment; family friends and associates included the Darwins and Wedgwoods. Neither Katherine nor her sister, Ann, ever married, and they spent much of their time helping to raise their nieces and nephews (children of their brother, Joseph), three of whom accompanied the elder Plymleys on the 1792 Welsh tour.

Plymley explains in one of her volumes of memoirs that her responsibility for educating the children after the death of their mother, Jane Plymley (née Panton; d. 1787), motivated her to continue her own studies, in order ‘that we [Plymley and her sister Ann] may be more capable of informing them’.[1] Family matters also shaped their home tourism: the 1792 tour was partly undertaken in order to visit the family of Joseph Plymley’s late first wife at Plasgwyn on Anglesey, while the 1802 tour through south Wales to Cornwall and the Scilly Isles was made in an attempt to improve the health of her niece Jane (1787-1807).

The Welsh tour of 1792 also hints at intellectual and conversable worlds beyond the more immediate setting of the family. As Jo Dahn has pointed out, Plymley’s diaries deal with a huge variety of material, from the minutiae of daily life to ‘fashion and manners, farming, landscape, estate management, economics, politics, pageantry, art, architecture, design, science, industry, and religion’.[2] In Shropshire, the Plymleys were part of and passionately interested in the movement for the abolition of slavery: the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson was a close family friend, and it is through her relationship with him in particular that we can trace Plymley’s views as a radical Whig.[3] Another key abolitionist, William Wilberforce, appears briefly in the 1792 tour, when for Plymley the landscape around Conwy brings to mind a quotation from Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village* (1770), quoted by Wilberforce in a celebrated parliamentary speech in favour of abolition in April 1792 (see vol. 1, ff. 22v-23r).



Figure 1. Katherine Plymley, 'December Moth' (1804), watercolour, copyright of Shrewsbury Museums Services [Plymley 434]

Plymley's tour details a number of key sites on the tour of north Wales, including a visit to Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby at Llangollen (vol. 1, ff. 5v-9r), and the picturesque landscape surrounding the town. More unusually, she also comments on the social fabric of Llangollen, lamenting the condition of the poor, who could, she feels, be more usefully employed (vol. 1, f. 9v). Further west on Anglesey, she describes the sociable world of the Bulkeley, Paget and Panton families (vol. 2, ff. 5r-17r), who dominated the island's political and social life in this period. However this tour is particularly notable for Plymley's account of a visit to Thomas Pennant at Downing Hall as part of the return trip. Connections between the two families were longstanding: Plymley's father, Joseph (1716-1802), had contributed illustrations to Pennant's *British Zoology* in the 1760s, and the Plymleys appear to have been greeted as old friends. Pennant's longtime artist, Moses Griffith, made portraits of the Plymley children (vol. 3, f. 11v), though these are not known to have survived. Plymley, who also painted (fig. 1), was an amateur entomologist (her scientific interests are more evident on her 1802 travels through south Wales), and the evidence of this tour suggests that she and Pennant

had much to discuss: ‘our time did not permit us to see nearly all the numberless drawings, & curiosities that M[r]: Pennant has collected, yet we were never idle, & were highly entertained’ (vol. 3, fol. 9v).[4]

Note on the source text:

The manuscript source for this edition consists of three small notebooks, in Plymley’s legible hand.

Notes

[1] Jo Dahn, Jo Dahn, ‘Plymley, Katherine (bap. 1758, d. 1829)’, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press).

[2] Ibid.

[3] See Kathryn Gleadle, ‘“Opinions deliver’d in conversation”: Conversation, Politics, and Gender in the Late Eighteenth Century’, in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Socety in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 61-79 (here p. 73). For Plymley’s anti-war as well as abolitionist views in the 1790s, see also Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 117-8.

[4] Some 500 of Plymley’s entomological watercolours survive, mostly painted after 1797; for examples, see http://www.darwincountry.org/explore/000359.html

Further reading:

- Jo Dahn, ‘Plymley, Katherine (bap. 1758, d. 1829)’, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press)
- —— ‘Women and Taste: a case study of Katherine Plymley (1758-1829), unpublished PhD thesis (Aberystwyth University, 2001), 3 volumes
- —— ‘Ceramics in the West Midlands in the Late 18th Century: Production and Consumption through the Eyes of Katherine Plymley’, *Interpreting Ceramics*, 11 (2009), http://www.interpretingceramics.com/issue011/articles/01.htm
- Kathryn Gleadle, ‘“Opinions deliver’d in conversation”: Conversation, Politics, and Gender in the Late Eighteenth Century’, in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 61-79

[1v]

August 13th 1792

My Brother, M[rs.] Plymley, Panton, Josepha, & Jane set out on a visit to M[r.] Panton's in Anglesey & through the kindness of my Brother my Sister & I accompanied them. We were a large party, my Brother, M[rs.] Plymley, & two of the young folks in their own chaise, my Sister, myself, the other little girl & a a maid servant (Nancy Hotchkiss) in another – two men Servants & two led Horses, on which some-

[2r]

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times my Brother, & often my Nephew rode –
It was a fine morning, we passed an hour or two in Shrewsbury & about 12 o’ clock set out from thence –
Pretty woody scenery coming down to Montford bridge. considerable plantations belonging to Lord Clive - the church at a small distance on the left, white & back'd finely by the hills – a new bridge nearly finished of three arches – A little further, on ^the right Hensdon house built by Lord Clive -

[2v]

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now inhabited by farmers – Ness on the right, at a little distance from the road, 2 or 3 good houses –

a little farther, are fine rocks rising among trees, on the right, some small plantations of Firs on their tops, in these rocks is a cave, known by the name of Kynaston's cave, at present inhabited by a poor family –
As we proceed we pass Aston on the left, the seat of Mr. Lloyd, pretty planta-

[3r]

tions about it. the church is very near the house. here is a fine view of the hills, indeed the whole way from Shrewsbury to this place the Breyddin, Moel y Gollfa, & Cevn y Castell, (Montgomeryshire hills) present a fine prospect to the left – from hence Oswestry church & many of the houses appear among trees, well back'd by hills – the whole country finely wooded –
Dined at Oswestry (18 mile from Shrewsbury) the church yard

[3v]

is pleasant, & there are some very good houses about it –
The road was excellent the whole way from Shrewsbury & beyond Oswestry continues equally good – to the left is a fine view of the woods about Chirk Castle - on the right is ^seen the tower of a church called S$^{t.}$ Martins & the tower of Chirk church before us – the road very steep down to the bridge, as we approached Chirk, & when pass'd the bridge the ascent is equally steep

[4r]

to the town. The view very fine; beautiful woods on each side the road – & the brook over which is the bridge at the bottom –
Just beyond Chirk pass the kitchen garden belonging to the castle on the right – a great distance from the house – fine view of Wynnstay at some distance on the right & Chirk castle on the left & of the woods belonging to each – Turning into a road

[4v]

on the left we enter the vale of Llangollen, rather a narrow, but a beautiful & sublime valley. Thro the greatest part the road is formed on the side of a hill or hills, rising directly on the left hand & a precipice on the right, to the bottom – the road uncommonly excellent. ^at the bottom of the precipice the river Dee winds in a most beautiful manner, beyond it rise hills, suddenly

[5r]

in picturesque shapes, with marked summits, one in particular on the top of which is Castle Dinas Brân (or Crow castle) is uncommonly fine. the whole is finely wooded – It was one of those serene & cheerful evenings when every thing appears so calm & peaceful, smoaks ascended in many places among the trees, beautiful light streaked the western sky & was reflected with great lustre

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in the river, as we caught it in its different turns among the trees – night came on just before we entered Llangollen & every thing suited the solemnity of the scene –
14$^{th.}$
Walk'd this morn$^{g.}$ to Plas Newydd the beautiful cottage belonging to Lady Elinor Butler & Miss Ponsonby it is almost contiguous to Llangollen. being not fully

[6r]

apprised that it was a necessary ceremony to send a written message we sent a verbal one, a very civil answer was returned informing us we should be very welcome to see it if we would send a written message, which being done a note was returned written in a very fine hand – It is small but very neat & elegant.

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Only two rooms are shewn, a small dining Parlour, ornamented with drawings, some by artists & some by friends – One demands particular attention, it is hung over the chimney piece & represents an inside view of Tintern Abbey, drawn in crayons, beautifully tinted, by Miss Harriet Bowdler. Thro' this parlour is the Study, a beautiful small

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gothic room, a study table in the middle, a compass window with a great deal of painted glass: three gothic bookcases let into the wall, brass wire doors, a gothic chimney piece over which are several pleasing miniature portraits of some of their friends – several good prints framed & glazed – view from the window a small lawn surrounded by

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trees & shrubs, a view of hills above them among which Castell Dinas Bran is conspicuous & forms a fine feature. The pleasure ground is entered thro' a prettily contrived gothic door with a bell hung in the ornamented top – it consists of little more than a gravel walk, kept in nice order, being swept with a hair broom, through

[8r]

shrubs surrounding the lawn. There are some seals with inscriptions, chiefly in French – I suppose there are few places that travellers make a point of seeing, so small, & it perhaps owes much of its celebrity to the romantic history of its inhabitants. Two young ladies leaving all their friends in Ireland, landing ~~in~~, I think ^in south

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Wales, & wandering till they fixed on this spot, making a vow never to sleep out of it, which was for many years kept, it has, I am told, lately been dispensed with – It is said they had very unpleasant homes, but as their Fathers were living their income, having left them privately, was very confined. they are now reconciled to their friends

[9r]

Lady Elinor's father is dead, & she is, I understand, in very good circumstances.
The view from Llangollen churchyard is very good, it stands high above the Dee - but is terribly crowded with beggars, most of them young children, many however old enough to procure their own living, at least to do much towards it; it is melancholy to see

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the rising generation brought up in such total idleness. Llandysilio being only two miles distant, my B$^{r.}$ Called upon M$^{r.}$ Jones who pressed him much to bring all his party to dine with him, & promised to meet us at Valle Crucis Abbey which lies a very short way from the road. M$^{r.}$ Jones was punctual, & we saw the beautiful remains of this

[10r]

Abbey which quite answered my expectation, the west end is uncommonly fine, the best representation of it I ever saw is a drawing of M$^{r.}$ Jones which he had the goodness to give me, & which I esteem much – one part of the ruin is much disfigured by a smart modern summer house with a straight canal by the side of it, built by the owner to make

[10v]

dining parties in – The road from hence to Llandysilio is very beautiful thro' a birch wood, among them many of the hanging birch finer than any I had before seen, the river Dee runs among the trees at the bottom over a very rocky bed & has a fine effect. Coming out of the Wood, ^the view of Llandysilio is very striking, the house appears embosomed

[11r]

in woods which conceals the walled garden in from & the cut yews which on a nearer approach disfigure a place that nature has been profusely kind to, its possessor too has very good taste but too indolent to exert it, his intimate friends have remonstrated in vain, he admits the justice of their remarks but the yew trees still

[11v]

stand & walls still surround the house – he & his sister received us most hospitably, we dined & drank tea with them & then proceeded to Corwen; the River running between Llandysilio & the road to that place obliged us to return to Llangollen. The bridge has five arches & is over a part of the Dee where the bed is more than commonly

[12r]

rocky, it is, as it were, quite sheets of rock – In the road to Corwen when opposite to Llandysilio the view is remarkably beautiful. The road is cut out of a rocky hill, about midway up it, a precipice down to the river, which winds with uncommon beauty over a rocky bed, the sides wooded to the edge of the water, the trees in some

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of the turns concealing it – Dinas Bran appears very fine – the birch wood we passed through to Llandysilio here appears in grand beauty from the opposite side – Llandysilio again shews all its beauties & conceals its defects, wooded in front, wooded fields appearing like fine lawns rising behind it – A singularly rocky hill called the Glisseg rocks

[13r]

forms a striking feature great part of the road – after having travelled along this precipice which in general having no fence, may create some alarm notwithstanding the road is wide & uncommonly good if the beautiful scenery did not almost exclude other ideas, we come into a low & rather dreary road, though I think it is only

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for a very short way that it is allowable to term it dreary – we reach Corwen in the dusk of a fine evening.
15th. Delightful morning – look at the church, in form of a Cathedral. one part appropriated for a school, the boys were just assembling, most of them without shoes or stockings which to those not much

[14r]

accustomed to see it appeared very comfortless, I ^hope habit makes it no great inconvenience to the boys, for they were otherwise full as well dressed as those of the same rank in England - Fine views from the church yard which is situated under a vast rocky hill – In the church yard is a building consisting of six small houses, for the widows of clergy

[14v]

in Merionethshire only, it is of stone, as the houses in general in this part of the country are – Set out – pass a bridge of 5 arches over the Dee, fine views down the river, but more like England than what I have lately seen – pass Rûg on the right – an old house, pretty little brook, wood behind & small chapel not far distant,

[15r]

pass another bridge of 2 wide arches over the Dee - the river winds on the left side of the road over a very gravelly & in some parts very rocky bed – See Maes Mawr on the right – The road assumes a more romantic appearance – pass a bridge of 1 arch over the Tower – Go up rather a steep ascent with fine rocks rising directly on

[15v]

the right on the left a stone wall – we alight – Look over the wall on ^the Glyn a most beautiful wooded glen through which a brook dashes over a rocky bed. the ground rises suddenly on the other side, Fine rocks bursting through the trees – As we walk the beauty of this noble scenery increases. A cascade falls

[16r]

down the rocks between the trees, at one place resting, as it were, in a basin & then dashing with impetuosity over the rocks – The Sun shone bright upon the water & added to the lustre of the scene – after this delightful glen, the road becomes rather barren & dreary – hills with scarcely a tree, & very few inclosures, a bridge of

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one arch appears in the midst of the scene. Pass Mr. Wynne's ^ Veolas on the right, a white house with trees about it, a bridge near it – one wide arch – On all sides extensive heaths – stone wall enclosures & here & there a tree & hedge – Pass through the first village I've seen with the church bells placed in open arches. See the road a long way

[17r]

before us in rather a barren country, but the view rendered very striking by a noble sight of the Caernarvonshire mountains at a great distance whose noble & grotesque summits rising one above another seem at last to hid themselves in the clouds; the day was very clear & the blue colour of them beau-

[17v]

tiful – here I caught the first sight of Snowdon, farther distant than any of the rest of this grand chain. our Shropshire hills shrank into banks in my imagination whilst I contemplated this grand scenery. Change horses at Shernioge, a single house with some trees about it. – Pass through the village of Voylass, the church on the right & the

[18r]

hall house – some woods about it – The road becomes dreary – Lose sight of the mountains – An uncommon rocky brook – Nothing but heaths – Again see the Caernarvonshire mountains appear rocky, without verdure – the view bold & romantic – Ascend rather a steep, a precipice to the left, reach the top. the beautiful vale of Llanrwst

[18v]

opens upon us, a steep down to it – fine view of the Town with the beautiful bridge of Inigo Jones, the situation very charming in a rich valley surrounded with hills. The Conway, here a very small river, runs on our left in its course to Llanrwst - Dine at Llanrwst – Church in the form of a Cathedral, one chapel entirely belongs to

[19r]

the Gwydir family. it is their burial place – Pass Gwydir on the left, very near Llanrwst. back'd by a fine wood, very old house, the ancient seat of the Wynnes. now possessed by a branch of the Duke of Ancaster's family [1] - The road from hence to Conway is through a fine valley surrounded by hills, consisting of fine meadow,

[19v]

pasture & arable land, several houses interspersed, here was hedges & trees – the river Conway on the right gradually encre^asing in width. In approaching Conway I was quite struck with the magnificence of the Castle. I have seen many views of it which had given me some idea of its form, but I never saw the place that a drawing is so inadequate to represent, never

[20r]

were my expectations so far surpassed, its awful vastness & magnificence to be conceived must be seen. My sister very well said, as we approach'd the gate-way leading to the Tower (the noble walls of the castle surround the town) "Walk about Sion, & go round about her: & tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks." (Psalm

[20v]

48).[2] After alighting at the Inn walk to the Castle, the situation on a rock above the Conway, which though I had seen it little more than a brook this morn$^{g.}$ was here especially at high tide almost a sea, is very striking & adds greatly to its magnificence, the hills on the opposite shore are finely wooded. as we looked over the walls of the castle we

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saw the ferry boat passengers land beneath us. the time of the evening before we could persuade ourselves to leave it was late, it was dusk. The scene was uncommonly grand. On viewing this astonishing edifice, my mind dwelt with pleasure for a moment on the times in which it was erected, feeling the pleasure these noble ruins gave

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me, I was ready to exclaim how pleasant must those times have been which saw it in its perfection, these ideas were soon checked by the reflection that the very grandeur I admired was a proof of feudal times when the many were slaves to ~~the~~ ^a few powerful lords. Nothing but extensive power could have enabled anyone to construct such a building

[22r]

& the nature & thought of it evince the hostilities in which these lords lived. So those who lived in those times could not raise the ideas it does in us, for antiquity adds greatly to its charms. Time has made it venerable, I am thankful to live in a time in which such buildings are useless; but it is so very fine that I hope it will always remain a monument of feu-

[22v]

dal grandeur –
16th: The morning rainy, but rather cleared as we set out. The clouds resting midway on the mountains leaving the summits free, brought strongly to our recollection the lines of Goldsmith rendered doubly striking by having been quoted by Mr Wilberforce when he moved the Abolition last April - [3]
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale, & midway leaves the storm

[23r]

Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.[4]

The road hilly – over Sychnant it is strikingly romantic, it is an excellent road made over the hill, at the bottom lies the old narrow road, which was in some places almost impassable. we are surrounded on all sides by rocky hills, with furze & a remarkably fine purple heath intermixed.

[1v]

this we had observed on many hills on our road; the day was misty with some drizzling rain, the clouds rolled over the hills which rose above us. As we advance the view opens in a point between hills to the open sea. a little farther & we see the island of Anglesey running out in a point, the Puffin Island, &

[2r]

the promontory of Orms Head. as we descend Sychnant, we see before us the road over Penmaen Mawr, perpendicular over the sea – reach Penmaen Mawr, an excellent road cut in the rocks & secured by a wall at the edge of the precipice to the sea. we alighted & walk'd over this wonderful road – looking over the wall we saw the waves

[2v]

of the sea break against the rocks beneath us. The view a fine open sea. Anglesey, Puffin Island & Orms Head, a noble cape rising high out of the waves – on the other hand the side of this great rock rises perpendicular above our heads with crags standing out in a stupendous manner; such is now this road, formerly almost impassable & no wall

[3r]

to secure the travellers from being through a false step thrown into the sea – ~~Pass~~ The day continued misty, pass Bangor, some good houses & the Cathedral looks very picturesque among trees – Reach Bangor Ferry about a mile & half beyond the town. Send the horses in one boat, cross ourselves in another. the Menai, this arm of the sea appears a

[3v]

most noble & beautifully winding river, it is so surrounded with hills, that few winds affect it. it was today quite still. the low rocky shore of Anglesey at the place of crossing was a fine contrast to the highly cultivated part of the shore we had seen from other parts of the road – land in Anglesey & reach Plasgwyn

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to dinner 6 miles from the ferry – A very handsome house, in a low situation built part on a rock & part on a bog, it has many trees about it, principally ash – there are many young plantations, the only view from the house is trees except from some of the windows the hill of Llwydiert - here we met a family, that I believe

[4v]

were truly glad to see us, our mutual attachment to my Brothers first wife, an attachment founded on her sweetness, prudence, & piety, formed a strong connexion between us, & the sight of her children, whom we have hitherto had the happiness to educate, was what they had long wished for, but my B^{r} : had not been able to persuade himself to re-

[5r]

trace the scenes he had first known her in whilst he was a widower – Our dear Josepha who had not been well for some time previous to her journey was much better for travelling – When we arrived the family consisted of M^{r} : & M^{rs}: Panton, Miss Panton, Miss Elizabeth & W. Bulkeley Panton, & M^{rs}: Perry, a witty woman who knew & loved the first M^{rs}: Plymley &

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longed to see her children. In the evening we walked to Red wharf bay, & had a fine view of open sea – In the walk see many rocks – M^{r}: Panton has a large shrubbery, planted on very uneven ground in some parts quite steep & several fine peeps at the Sea –
18th: M^{r}: P. Panton arrived he was on the circuit[5] & came here before he went

[6r]

to Beaumaris & brought M^{r}: Mander one of the council with him, when he arrived we happened to be putting the little people to bed he ran up to our rooms & welcomed us to Plasgwyn with much kindness.
19th:
Went to Pentrath church a low situation, on the road to it is a fine view to open sea, some trees about it – heard the service read in

[6v]

Welsh for the first time today – In the evening walk upon the road to Beaumaris, from whence is a fine view of the Carnarvonshire mountains.
21st: the little girls bathed, went in the carriage & it was their dressing room –
22nd: Went with the younger part of the family to a ball at Beaumaris given by Lord Uxbridge. A very

[7r]

smart one & a great deal of dancing. there was a supper & it was very late before we returned; before the ball we drank tea at Mr. J Pantons who is married & has a small house at Beaumaris. The road from Plasgwyn to Beaumaris has very fine views of the sea & of the Carnarvonshire mountains, we drove through Lord Bulkeley's

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grounds which gave us a sight of many additional beauties –

23d: Mr Panton & Mr: Mander returned from Beaumaris.

24th: the little girls bathed -

25th: We dined at Lord Bulkeley's publick day, he has one every week - this was a visit perfectly novel to me, there were at least fifty people about an equal

[8r]

number of gentlemen & ladies, ~~all~~ ^most of the ladies remarkably well dressed – The view from Baron hill is the most striking I ever saw, the house, which is an excellent one, as far as I saw, & has many noble rooms, stands upon an eminence above the sea. Beaumaris is situated at the bottom of an extensive lawn close to the shore & its old castle

[8v]

is a noble object, the sea stretches out on one hand as far as the eye extends, opposite, & on the other side, the lofty Carnarvonshire mountains bound the prospect, the bases of them are finely cultivated, the promontory of Orms head wherever it is seen is a noble sight, it here appears an island. Lady Bulkley has the pret-

[9r]

tiest green house I ever saw where she often sits & works. the walls of it are cover'd with Geraniums, trailled to them like fruit trees, they are now in full blossom –

27th: We dined at Lord Uxbridge's publick day, who likewise gives one every week. Here were about 30 people dined – these visits look something like

[9v]

what I should conceive of the court of some petty Prince. we were shewn into the drawing room, presented to the Lord & Lady of the house & then seated in a circle, after dinner (which was here an excellent one, much otherwise at Lord Bulkley's), we broke into parties, all form ceased, we walk'd about & enjoyed the delightful scenery

[10r]

with which these places abound – we met with extraordinary civility in both places – Plas Newydd is an admirable house, the rooms very noble – the view from it is not so grand as from Lord Bulkleys. Had I not, however, seen Baron Hill first I should have called ^it very grand, it is situated on the banks of the Menai, this beautiful arm of the

[10v]

sea is seen for a great length of way from the house & is at last lost among the mountains, Snowdon is here a very fine object; the woods are very fine & feather down to the water; among the woods are two fine Cromlechs[6] - In the woods here & at Beaumaris are numbers of fine old oaks. I do not recollect seeing many oaks in any

[11r]

other parts of the island I have seen –

28th: We rode to Llandyfnan, Mr: Lewis's, nothing remarkable – In all our rides & walks fine views of the Carnarvonshire mountains, the top of Snowdon seldom clear – The little girls continue bathing which they like much – Josepha quite recovered – which makes us very thankful –

[11v]

29th: took a walk up Llwydiart - an extensive view from it – see the ^sea about three parts round us – see Holyhead mountain from it & indeed from many other places, for there are few hills in Anglesey & none very high - We are most conveniently & comfortably lodged here & our entertainment is in all respects very good. Mr. Panton has the kindness

[12r]

to let the young folks breakfast dine & sup in his study except Panton, who dines with us, they have the free range of three large Parlours the Study & the Hall & enjoy themselves very much –

30th: We took a ride upon the sands at Redwharf which are remarkably safe. It blew as hurricane last night – I never heard such wind. the family said it

[12v]

is not once in half a year that there is such a storm – it subsided this morning & it being low water we rode very far on the sands, the waves continued in great agitation, I never was more delighted. we rode till we almost touched the waves, they appeared like green mountains with the white foam dancing on their summits –

[13r]

my little horse (for my Br: had the goodness to bring him for me) canter'd most pleasantly, & was not at all startled – The seagulls & cormorants were walking about quite tame –

31st: We made a most pleasant excursion to the Parys ^copper mine & the port of Amlwch, which is very near the mine – As I am not used to see mines, I cannot

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be so sensible of the wonders of this as I otherwise should be, but from all I hear, it is the most wonderful in the world. there is no underground work which, I believe is one of its extraordinary properties. not so much as a blade of grass is to be seen near it – The Port of Amlwch I was quite charmed with & quite unwilling to

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leave. It was well I saw the mine first or I should scarcely have quitted it in time to see anything else – we went on board a sloop & had a very hearty reception from the captain, who knew Mr: Bulkley Panton very well – whilst we were there three ships passed very near in full sail, which is a sight that pleases me much –

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Sepr: 4th: rode towards Beaumaris-

5th: rode to Beaumaris through the grounds at Baron hill & by Beaumaris castle - the sea comes close up to the town, which is like all the Welch towns I have seen, a very poor one, at the custom house are many small vessels –

6th: Went to a ball at Plas Newydd. it was con-

[15r]

ducted most capitally, there was a magnificent supper – about thirty couples danced – a pleasant circumstance attends welch balls, the gentlemen are so fond of dancing that I believe no lady sits still but from their own choice – after supper, before the gentlemen joined us, six ladies danced Scotch reels in two sets, very prettily – We

[15v]

were very late before we returned – Anglesey affords very little fruit, at Lord Uxbridge's was great plenty brought from Staffordshire - Mr: Panton has five wall'd gardens & no fruit –

8th: rode to Beaumaris through the grounds at Baron hill, saw Lord Bulkleys Hawks sent off. He is training them

[16r]

to revive the diversion of Hawking – as we were riding through the grounds Lord Uxbridge passed in his cutter.[7] Lord Bulkley makes a point of saluting him on these occasions from a small fort that he has in his grounds, we happened to be near, but our horses stood better than I expected – these two lords are here little

[16v]

monarchs. I think Anglesey is the most dependent place I ever saw – Lord Uxbridge & Lord Bulkley have now agreed to divide the county between them – they use their interest to confer obligations upon every family of any consequence in the island, it is wonderful by acting together, how many appointments they have procured

[17r]

for the gentlemen's sons. I lament when I see gentlemen of independent fortune (which is often the case) accept of these things, but so it is here, almost all are under obligations to them, & do them homage on their court days, as I think their publick dinners may be called –
9th: Left Plasgwyn, it being Sunday we went first

[17v]

to church – the latter part of the time we spent there Mrs: Parry had left it & Mr : & Mrs: Panton arrived, we left them there. The face of the county is very unlike what I had been used to, the enclosures are mostly mounds of earth, but so much overgrown with grass, fern, brambles &c that it has the effect of hedges

[18r]

at a distance – some enclosures are made with stone. there is scarcely a tree to be seen except about the gentlemens houses, which have all some wood about them – the general view is, these enclosures with spots of trees which mark the gentlemens houses – the ground is fruitful yet very near the rock, which starts out in some part

[18v]

of most of the fields – the sea views are very fine, & the Carnarvonshire mountains are fine features in their prospect – there is not a gentlemans house on the island more than four mile from the sea, & most are much nearer – the county is popular, & there are a great many gentlemans families who visit much together. I never

[19r]

was anywhere where domestic news travelled so quick it reminded me of the voyages to the south seas,[8] where one finds, in the society & friendly islands in particular, what was done in one place was soon known all over the island – Miss Panton crossed the ferry with us dined with us at Jackson's (the Inn) & parted with us

[19v]

after dinner – beautiful view down the river from hence – called upon Mrs: P. Parry of Bangor - her house very near the sea – noble view on the road from the ferry – mountains in front – Orms head to the left appearing insulated, Puffin island - from Bangor - Sea with Puffin island point of Anglesey & Beaumaris - Bangor fair

[20r]

today, the street quite crowded the dress of the woman almost universally, long blue cloth cloaks & beaver hats - as soon as we pass the Town see the vessels at anchor, Beaumaris, Puffin island Orms head, mountains - Pass ^on the left Lime grove a beautiful small villa of Mr: Wyatt (brother to the architect) steward to Lord Penrhyn - Grand view of

[20v]

mountains finely cultivated at bottom – Snowdon just opposite, cloud capt – country finely cultivated – to the left Lord Penrhyn's at some distance from the road it appears very handsome – Pass close to the road ^on the left the church of Llandegai, it is new & very neat in form of a cross – just beginning to build a new bridge over

[21r]

the Ogwen - Fine sea view to the left. long shore of Anglesey, Beaumaris, Puffin island, Orms head, Penmaen mawr - Noble terrace to Aber, the same fine view continues to the left, fine mountains in front & to the right – evening rains – Aber - the houses white - it is a very pretty object from

[21v]

Baron hill, drink tea at the Inn - The evening clears – noble terrace continues & the same delightful views continue towards Anglesey & in only varying as we turn, a beautiful purple tinge upon the prospect – Open Sea, of a beautiful green – the white waves dancing – Pass Bryn y Neuadd - Reach Penmaen mawr, the world

[22r]

of waters beautiful, the sea very green – the waves gently dashing against the shore beneath the lofty promontory we are going over – the view takes in Anglesey, Puffin island, Orms head, Sychnant - the waves roll finely & break against the shore – Leave the sea more to the left & begin to ascent Sych-

[22v]

nant, we are surrounded by rocky mountains with a small fertile valley between – Over Sychnant lofty barren rocky mountains surround us – The sky was stormy, it seemed to promise much worse weather than we now experienced, for the evening was solemnly fine – when over Sychnant there is a fine

[23r]

open towards Conway - See the noble castle, the river & a beautiful wooded eminence – Reach Conway -
10th: Morning very stormy, the sea very rough, we were to cross the Ferry having promised Mr: Pennant to make Downing in our way home. The chaise & horses went over first, they had been

[1v]

gone an hour when we set out, yet they had not reach'd the opposite shore, the waves beat violently against the chaise – As none of ^us except my Brother had been at all used to the water we had no apprehension of danger & I was eager to go, as I wish'd to know what a rough sea was, my Br. proposed waiting till the next

[2r]

day but we were told that there was no chance of its being any better for many days as an equinoxial (their phrase) had come down the night before & wou'd continue to blow some days – he then wish'd to avoid the ferry by going round over the hills, but was informed the roads were impractical even with four horses – at

[2v]

length we got into the boat – the master of the Inn came with us to direct the boatmen to keep the boat right to the waves, for we afterwards learnt had the waves broke against the side of the boat they probably would have come in, & had we shipped two or three of these waves they wou'd have sunk us – the wind was violent

[3r]

men & women tied their hats on – the view was fine – from Conway side Marle, & Bodscallen the latter on an eminence above Marle, rises among woods – as we row from Conway, its noble Castle rising at the water's edge, the walls & round towers running along the shore, the roughness of the sea – all was striking. When the boat came to

[3v]

the waves broke over us – it was high tide & about a mile over – as we rise on the opposite shore the view of Conway back'd by wood & mountains is inexpressively grand. In a short time we turn to the left, leave these fine views, go through a pretty valley between hills – on the left rocky & prettily wooded –

[4r]

Pass a pretty brick house to the right, fine open sea to the left – Pass a small house on the shore with fir plantations – Go along a noble terrace – fine open sea – walk up a steep, look back, the hills above Conway appearing beyond Orms head - pass through a small village – pass at some little

[4r]

distance a gentlemans seat close to the shore, Gwrych, formerly belonging to a friend & school fellow of my B^{rs} : M^{r}: Lloyd - by his death it pass'd to his sister married to M^{r}: Hesketh - Sea view but less grand that what we have seen from the want of the fine lofty mountains – See Abergelly before us – Wind continues

[5r]

very high, the waves break nobly – See only one vessel, a brig – tost about & seems to remain almost in the same place – Sun breaks out & throws a fine radiance over the waves. Pass through Abergelly - look at the church, it is large, from the church yard a fine view of open sea & Orms Head - The

[5v]

road farther distant from the sea, but still fine views of it, pleasing shore – A cultivated county opens before us – fine view of Rhuddlan - Pass through a village –Fine view of S^{t}: Asaph - were we going the other way the sea wou'd be finer – Pass Kimmel a fine park & magnificent house, which

[6r]

must enjoy a charming land & sea prospect – See a good house near the sea – S^{t}: Asaph, situated in a delightful cultivated country, on an eminence, appears very fine before us, the contrast is so great to the views we have lately seen, that I am ready to think I never saw so cultivated

[6v]

a scene. Approach S^{t}: Asaph go over rather a pretty bridge of five low wide arches – reach the Inn which is exactly opposite the cathedral - fine trees ^in its yard – the Cathedral small, but the choir has lately been fitted up in a very good stile by Wyatt - the cieling very neat. the tabernacle work good

[7r]

painted with oker - a small Organ – As we came out a Lady hasten'd to meet us & said, as we appeared to be looking about us, she would, if we pleased, shew us the Palace – She proved to be M^{rs}: Bagott, the bishop's lady. The bishop is building part of the palace quite new & altering & fitting up the old

[7v]

part – the front is entirely new & of a beautiful stone, it will be an excellent house – her civility was beyond anything I ever experienced from a stranger – I had some years before seen her at Acton Barnet, & my Brother had formerly known her at Oxford, when we had walked about. She enquired the names

[8r]

of the party she was with. when she heard it, she mentioned to have known a young man of that name formerly at Oxford - my B^{r} : & she recognised each other – she pressed us to dine with her & take their commons, for she said whilst the palace was building they had their dinner from an Inn - We

[8v]

had however bespoken our dinner & with many thanks took our leave – she sent us a basket of fine fruit – The situation of the palace is snug & pretty – We are now in the Vale of Clwyd, a fine cultivated country – get out to walk, look back over the vale, the view fine, Ruddlan marsh - Ruddlan castle,

[9r]

the open sea beyond it, Orms head, distant view of the Carnarvonshire mountains - Wide common rather dreary – Evening very rainy, attemp to go a nearer road – find it only fit for a horse, after some difficulty reach Downing - Only M^{r} : & M^{rs}Pennant: & Miss Sarah at home -

[9v]

13th: Leave Downing, a most charming spot, where we spent some very pleasant days – our time did not permit us to see nearly all the numberless drawings, & curiosities that M^{r}: Pennant has collected, yet we were never idle, & were highly entertained – the house is of stone, & a very good & comfortable

[10r]

family residence. The grounds are very fine about it, a beautiful lawn like valley with fine woods on each hand – In ~~whom~~ ^one a romantic dell, with a brook, at one time quite obscured by trees, at another breaking through them, runs at the bottom, the other rises in an eminence in which there are many

[10v]

seats which command fine views, see the sea from all of them, but, except at high tide, it is a great part sand – M^{r}: Pennant has a person of the name of Williams to dine at his house every day, he has continued it for 30 years – he is a very inoffensive character, rather weak & odd. Mr Pennant seems

[11r]

much diverted with him – In Wales the custom of giving toasts whilst the Ladies stay continues, M^{r}: Pennant, whilst we were there, omitted it, M^{r}: Williams did not seem to like it, "M^{r}: Pennant, said he, You forget all your friends" – It struck ^me as the best reason I ever heard for giving daily toasts, there is something rather pretty

[11v]

in the idea of remembering our friends at meals – Here our three little people sat for their pictures to Moses Griffith a very ingenious & truly modest man, M^{r}: Pennants Artist - In the road from Downing to Holywell we see the sea almost the whole way, the estuary of the Dee, & the opposite Cheshire shore, as we approach Holywell

[12r]

to the left are fine dells & woods with the large buildings for the cotton works among them – Holywell is a wide street but not long. we called upon M^{r}: Panton who has a good house here, where he resides two or three months in the spring, he left Plasgwyn a few days before us, his mining business call'd him into Flintshire

[12v]

we walked to see the celebrated well, one of the finest springs in the kingdom & to which Holywell owes its increasing trade as numerous cotton manufactories are erected upon it, as well as many mills for various purposes[9] - Set out again – view, the estuary of the Dee, Parkgate on the opposite shore, pass a pretty white house

[13r]

to the right – soon after another – See Flint Town & Castle on the sands, look over a flat but well cultivated country – See Chester situated on the Dee, Parkgate - the whole bounded by the distant Cheshire hills - magnificent Stables to the right – Pass through a village – pretty church – See vessels at anchor at Flint - Pass some fine

[13v]

woods – Go through Northop, good tower to the church - from hence lose sight of the sea – The first view of Mold striking – handsome tower to the church, situated in a fine country, see many gentlemens houses about it – A large building erecting for a cotton manufactory[10] - Set out again from Mold, fine wooded

[14r]

country to the right, see three gentlemens seats at one view, Tower & the two Leeswoods, [11] one belonging to M[r]: Waining , the other M[r]: Eyton - Pass another gentlemans seat to the right – catch a peep at ^the ruin of Caergwrle castle, pass a church to the right – view of Caergwrle castle - pass a village, a bridge

[14v]

& a mill – Hope to the left – come to a part of the road shaded by a row of trees on each side – Pass the fine woods & house of M[r]: Humberston - The approach to Wrexham flat – the road from Mold to Wrexham in general flat, except about Caergwrle - appeared very tame – The tower of

[15r]

Wrexham Church wonderfully rich & beautiful gothic work – The town the best I've seen in Wales many good houses in & near it – a very gay & hospitable neighbourhood – the diversion of Archery much the fashion. Slept at the Inn ^14th breakfast at M[r]: Eyton's who at present, till he has finished his alteration at Leeswood

[15v]

resides at his house called the mount in Wrexham, ascend a number of steps to it – view from the drawing room quite country - M[r] : & M[rs]: Eyton were going today to a Bow meeting,[12] she was in her uniform, green jacket ^& pettegoat trimmed in Vandyck points with buff, beaver hat & feather with a device in Silver placed in front emblema-

[16r]

tical of the diversion, M[r]: Eyton wore a black ribbon under his coat, with the same device, but being a Clergyman, he decently buttoned it up – Pass Erthig to the left fine stone house with woods – Pass a pretty looking irregular house on the right – Go through Rhiwabon, alighted & were

[16v]

shewn the church by our old acquaintance M[r]: Denman, it is very handsome, a beautiful monument in it to the memory of the last S[r]: Watkin William's first Lady,[13] it is a statue of her, here is an Organ, & a beautiful font, presented by the old S[r]: W. W. on the christening of his son - Proceed, handsome stone gateway to the

[17r]

left leading to Wynnstay - see Wynnstay, fine woods - see Plas Maddock to the right – fine distant view of Chirk Castle, go over the new bridge on the Dee - steep down to it & up again fine wooded banks – fine view to the right into the Vale of Llangollen - Castle Dinas Bran - Trevor to the right – fine view of Chirk Castle & woods

[17v]

to the right – Chirk bridge pretty rocky river, trees feather to the water – pretty little valley – pass a brick house to the right fine woods – dine at Oswestry - very rainy evening – drink tea at Shrewsbury, reach Longnor - After a most agreeable & prosperous excursion, & have the happiness of returning

[18r]

all well – We have reason to be very thankful – Just before we left Plasgwyn we heard of the death of M[r]: Falconer - he died on the 5[th]: And on coming home my B[r]: rec[d] a letter from M[rs]: Falconer the D[r's]: wife, informing him of it – He was a man of great learning, very various & extensive

[18v]

reading & possessed a most retentive memory – He was every ready to communicate his knowledge to those who were desirous of it – To the young he was a most instructive companion, he loved their company & if they were teacable, he was ready to improve them – His life had been much clouded by a dreadful nervous dis-

[19r]

order that seized him the day before he was to have been called to the bar – for two years he thought his life in danger. In some degree he recovered but was constantly afflicted with nervous complaints. The spasms in his stomach were daily so violent as to oblige him to have recourse to Brandy & Ginger in large quantities; his

[19v]

constitution must have been originally very strong, for through all these complaints & the remedy pain obliged him to fly to, he lived to the age of fifty nine. He was quite worn out, his memory lately failed him, his head was confused, he was comotous, & in the state he had for some time been in, death was a happy release – He had studied the Scriptures

[20r]

much, was very pious, & firmly attached to the church of England; he composed some Sacramental mediations which he printed to give to his friends but did not publish. For many years past he had been engaged in a new edition of *Strabo* , which is to be printed at the Clarendon press,[14] he did not live to see it come

[20v]

out – His friends were very numerous, & he was attached to them with great tenderness, he never loved to take leave of them & always avoided that ceremony – When my Brother was at Chester School, M^{r}: Falconer first saw & was pleased with him, he had him much with him, Sundays & Holydays, he seldom missed, & he confined his attachment invariably –

[21r]

He generally passed some time every year at my Fathers, & when my Father left Longnor at my Brothers; he had, I believe, a sincere regard for all our family – He was always ready to converse & told a story admirably – Some thought him too fond of talking, I loved to hear him; but latterly, I will confess, he degenerated sometimes so

[21v]

much into prattle that, if I could have chosen, none should have heard him but those who knew how to respect his many estimable qualities, & do pity those disorders that had so much hurt him, unfortunately he was not select in his acquaintance – In politicks he was of violent high church principles & was much bigoted

[22r]

to them, it was, therefore, to us often unpleasant to hear him on this subject – In reading poetry he had a solemn peculiar cadence, that when I was a little accustomed to I thought agreeable – he read Scripture admirably, I never was more struck then with his reading the 28th: chapter of Job – a favourite chapter with him – He was very excellent in reading plays,

[22v]

both in the solemn scenes of Tragedy & in the humourous ones of Comedy, in the last he was truly laugable – He had a good taste in paintings & drawings & had a large collection of prints; music he did not love, yet could talk of it very well – His features were strong & plain, he had the look of a foreigner & a gentleman – He left his fortune, which was such as enabled him to live in elegance & hospi-

[23r]

tality, to his^X [1] nephew, his Brothers son, now at Oxford, ~~& of~~ whose education he had always been at the expence of – He left many small legacies – 20£ was the highest except to my Brother who is distinguished by 50£–

I was willing to say this much of a man whom I highly respected, & to whose various communications I am much obliged –

[23v]

He once, singularly enough, advised me never to speak of religion to a clergyman, he pressed it much, make it a rule, said he – I suppose this much be understood with some limitations, & perhaps principally meant never to begin the subject with them – So far I think is perfectly right –

Editorial Notes

[1] Gwydir Castle passed from the Wynn family to the Duke of Ancaster by marriage in the late seventeenth century.

[2] Psalm 48:12-13 (KJV).

[3] A reference to a parliamentary debate on the abolition of the slave trade (2 April 1792). See here Plymley and her brother were longstanding abolitionists. As Harriet Guest explains, in her early 1790s diaries ‘Plymley allied herself with those who saw the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade as part of more all-embracing “cause of liberty” which focused on the need “to reform real defects” in the political organization of the country’. See *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 118.

[4] Oliver Goldsmith, ‘The Deserted Village’ (1770), ll. 189-92, in Roger Lonsdale (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 527.

[5] i.e. the legal circuit

[6] Neolithic burial chambers in the grounds of Plas Newydd; see here

[7] Small to medium-sized sailing boat built for speed.

[8] Voyages to the South Seas – Captain James Cook led three expeditions to the South Pacific between 1768 and 1779, in search of new geographical and scientific knowledge. For an account of Cook’s voyages, and examples of the illustrations made by some of the naturalists and artists who took part in them, see here.

[9] For an overview of industrial developments in Wales in this period, particularly as recorded in topographical art, see Mary-Ann Constantine, ‘John Hassell, Wales and the “industrial picturesque”' here

[10] Edward Pugh describes this five-storey building as a ‘handsome and stupendous cotton factory, close to the town … lighted by 220 windows; and is a useful neighbour to Mold as it employs a great number of the poor.’ *See Cambria Depicta: A Tour Through North Wales* (London: E. Williams, 1816), pp. 345-6.

[11] For an overview of the complex history of the Leeswood estate, see here

[12] For contemporary illustrations of bow meetings at Erddig Hall and Gwersyllt Park, see here and here

[13] For an image of this monument, to Lady Henrietta Williams Wynn, see here

[14] The edition of Strabo mentioned by Plymley was completed by Falconer’s nephew, Rev. Thomas Falconer (1772-1839); the final volume of this work was published in Oxford in 1807.

Authorial Notes

[1] I believe I was misinformed, it was to his Brother in the first instance –