# Catherine Hutton’s Tour of Wales: 1797

1797


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*By Mary-Ann Constantine*



*Catherine Hutton at the age of 43 (Herald Press, Birmingham)*

Catherine Hutton (1756-1846) was one of the more perceptive and thoughtful writers of Welsh tours at the end of the eighteenth century. Her observations, as sharp as they are sympathetic, stand out for their easy elegance and their readability. The accounts of her travels in north Wales are preserved in National Library of Wales MS 19079C, a neat, hand-written volume with a carefully laid-out title page:

Letters from North Wales
Written by Catherine Hutton
To Thomas Hutton, her Brother
from 1796-1800
And printed in the Monthly Magazine
By Sir Richard Phillips, 1816
Catherine Hutton
January 4th, 1842.

Like many title-pages, it doesn’t quite tell the whole story. From the style of the handwriting and the ‘1842’ inscription at the bottom, it looks as if it has been drawn up several decades after the years of the letters it describes. The volume also includes, as an appendix, extracts from reviews and letters from friends responding to the publication of Catherine Hutton’s novels, a piece about female writers from the *Monthly Magazine* of 1821, and an obituary of Hutton, who died in 1846. The bulk of the volume, however, is indeed a copy of the letters from Wales, and these are written in an earlier form of Hutton’s hand. Various marks, deletions, insertions and notes suggest that it was her attempt at pulling all four tours together, perhaps in preparation for their serial (and partial) publication in the *Monthly Magazine* in the 1810s.

This rather complicated manuscript history matters because tours are in and of themselves historical documents, and can bear witness to lives and landscapes which have changed for ever; there is a world of difference between 1800 and 1840, and even between 1796 and the 1810s, and it helps to consider what kinds of editorial interventions may have taken place between the writing of the original correspondence (which has not been located) and this particular recension. Hutton was an assiduous letter-writer all her life, and her three novels (*The Miser Married*, *The Welsh Mountaineer*, and *Oakwood Hall*) all draw on the epistolary form. It seems likely that the text preserved here is close in tone, style and content to the letters received by her brother Thomas (and possibly other recipients) over the course of the Huttons' journeys through north Wales, but that some revisions have been made, and that the more personal comments usual to such letters— on friends, or family, or current affairs—have been removed. What is clear, however, is that the manuscript copy was itself edited, revised and considerably truncated for publication in the *Monthly Magazine* between 1816 and 1819. This in itself justifies the inclusion of Hutton's text in a corpus of unpublished tours in Wales; the nature of the revisions is discussed in more detail below.

***Catherine Hutton: writer and traveller***

Born prematurely in 1756 to the Birmingham bookseller and historian William and his wife Sarah, Catherine Hutton was, according to her father, 'perhaps the smallest human being ever seen', but grew up healthy enough in a comfortable town house in New Street; the family also built a country house, Bennett's Hill, just north of the city at Washwood Heath. William Hutton published the first history of Birmingham in 1781, and moved in Dissenting circles, attending the New Meeting house where Joseph Priestley preached. Catherine describes Priestley's visits to their home, and, like her father, wrote a vivid account of the 1791 Church and King riots, when not only Priestley's house, library and workshop were destroyed, but the properties of seven others—the Huttons amongst them. Both the New Street town house and Bennett's Hill were looted; the latter was burnt to the ground.

Sarah Hutton was an invalid over a long period, and her daughter, besides caring for her, took on many of the household responsibilities. The family visited Buxton in attempts to improve Sarah's health; and in the summer of 1787 they undertook a journey to Aberystwyth, a small coastal town just beginning to find itself on the tourist itineraries. Three of Catherine's letters from this visit were published in a later memoir compiled by her cousin Catherine Hutton Beale, and (judging from Beale's treatment of later letters) are likely to have been quite heavily revised before publication. William and Catherine Hutton would return to north Wales four more times after Sarah's death in 1796, and both father and daughter wrote accounts of their journeys. William's were published as *Remarks Upon North Wales* (1803); Catherine's appeared as a series of 'Letters' published in the *Monthly Magazine* between 1815 and 1819. The *Monthly*'s editor, Sir Richard Phillips, was a friend and correspondent of Catherine Hutton, and in 1821 she was included in the list of 'twenty four ladies of pre-eminent talents as writers in various departments of literature and philosophy' (a list from which Jane Austen, whom Hutton admired, is conspicuously absent). Besides her three novels, Catherine Hutton also published a *Tour of Africa* (1819–21), a compilation of travel narratives by other writers. Recent work on Hutton as a novelist, letter-writer and tour writer can be found in **Further Reading**, below.

Comparison between the published letters and the manuscript shows a range of different revisions. The published 1796 Tour is very close to the printed version, with the significant omission of only a few paragraphs in which Hutton describes a particularly irritating fellow-guest at their hotel in Barmouth. Thereafter the changes become more significant, as the 29 letters written out over 138 pages are condensed into a mere 18, often conflating accounts where the Huttons have taken the same road more than once: moreover, while the 10 MS letters of the 1796 tour fit comfortably into 9 printed letters in the *Monthly*, the equally extensive tours of 1797, 1799, and 1800 are squashed down to a mere three apiece. This has implications for the published tour as historical witness: for example, sections of Letter 16, dated 'Caernarfon 28 August, 1800' (which appeared in the *Monthly* for September 1818), appear in the manuscript version as Letter 23, dated from Ruthin a week earlier. One notable loss is the conflation of two separate journeys from Caernarfon through Bettws Garmon to Beddgelert; the first of these, fascinating because Hutton is deliberately following in Pennant's footsteps and cites him at length, leaves only the ghost of an impression in the published version, and omits the references to Pennant altogether (1799 Tour, MS Letter 13; MM (June, 1818, 387-99). It also omits Hutton's typically droll (and self-ironizing) comment on her preparations for the next stage of the journey, the notorious 'rock road' linking Beddgelert and Pont Aberglaslyn to the main coach road on the coast: 'Having armed myself with an unusual quantity of excellent cold roast beef, I rode to Pont Aber Glaslyn, and entered upon the celebrated road from thence to Tan y Bwlch.'

Publication in the *Monthly* certainly altered Hutton's voice, shifting the emphasis to objective, factual observations in the style of other published tours, and slicing away many of the elements that give her narrative its particular life and tone. These include details of her own struggles with the experience of travel in wild Welsh weather ('surely such petticoats were never seen!'), admissions of fatigue and illness, and spontaneous expressions of judgement or enthusiasm: the only woman wearing cotton (rather than the more laudable native wool) at a market in Cerrigydrudion in 1797 is described in the manuscript as 'a dirty trollop, who seemed the refuse of another country'; in the published version she is a 'dirty creature'. There are memorable pen-portraits, such as that of the landlady of the Cross Foxes at Llanarmon, or of the courteous and intelligent boatman, Richard Williams of Cwm-y-Glo. Occasionally a brief paragraph half-opens a door into another life, such as that of the Irish emigrée with whom Hutton and her father share the guest-house in Caernarfon in 1799, the summer of the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion:

I have made another acquaintance, directly opposite. Pity for her forlorn situation attaches one to her. She is an unmarried woman, turned of thirty, of a noble family in Ireland, whom the troubles there have driven into Wales. She has not been in any personal danger; but her brother's house has been plundered by the rebels, and his domestics threatened with instant death. Such is her terror at these proceedings, that she declared to me she would not have slept another night in his house for a thousand guineas; and I am told, that here she sleeps in her cloaths. She is at Caernarvon without either friend or servant. The people here have a notion she is a little deranged. This, however, is not the case. She appears to me not only rational but sensible. She is so grateful for my attention, and her manner is so affecting, that sometimes I can hardly refrain from tears. (Letter 19, 1799)

Hutton is also concerned with the impact of tourism on the culture and economy of Wales, restricting her 'good opinion of the people of Wales to those who have had little intercourse with the English' and noting the visible and rapid differences made by 'swarms' of tourists in recent years: 'the roads are improved; the farms are raised; money is introduced; and the people are rapacious.' A clergyman tells her that 'the English Mountain-hunters' have 'made his country so dear that he cannot afford to live in it', and she worries about the treatment of horses, driven to exhaustion on the new, frantic post-roads. (Letter 12, 1797)

Welsh landscapes bring out some of her finest qualities as a writer, and she is in turn vivid, passionate, and wryly humorous about her own responses to the various scenes encountered on the road, and to views of mountains in particular. She found the 'view from the hill above Harlech […] so stupendous it shook my whole frame', and took evening walks from the guest house in Caernarfon to gaze at the Snowdon range 'with awe, almost with reverence' (Letter 5, 1796; Letter 12, 1797). For someone who suffered as badly as Hutton did from vertigo, mountains are as fascinating as they are 'forbidden'; and even riding along coach-roads cut into steep hillsides can be enough to force her to dismount and walk. The Huttons travelled on horseback, with Catherine riding pillion; they were accompanied by a servant, John, who figures in some of William Hutton's poems on their Welsh tours. Hutton notes that this 'mode of travelling places us in rather equivocal light at inns', where guests in carriages, who could be charged much higher rates, were rather more welcome than riders on horseback, or, even worse, pedestrians (Letter 29, 1800).

Hutton's experiences in north Wales fed directly into her second novel, *The Welsh Mountaineer* (1817) which, making ample use both of letters and of travel narratives, develops Wollstonecraftian theories about female liberty by exploring two sharply contrasting women's lives, one metropolitan, physically weakened and trammelled by social mores, and one fresh from the mountains of Meirionydd, wilder, more energetic, if socially more naïve. There is no doubt where Hutton's sympathies lie. Another appeal of these tours, then, beyond their intrinsic merit, is the way they can be read in direct conversation with other texts, from Hutton's own novels (written as she was revisiting these Welsh tours for publication), to her father's *Remarks Upon North Wales*, a witty, more succinct, and more cerebral account of the same roads travelled. Accounts of north Wales by other writers in this digital corpus, both women and men, offer further material for comparison; and it is also intriguing to think of Hutton covering much the same ground as the young J.M.W Turner, at much the same time.

Catherine Hutton appears to have done much of the planning, and researched the itineraries of these journeys. In 1796 the Huttons were based at Barmouth, travelling there from Birmingham via Shrewsbury, Montgomery and Mallwyd and returning via Bala and Llangollen. Excursions from Barmouth included a memorable journey to Harlech castle, and a brief glimpse of Tan-y-Bwlch. In 1797, 1799 and 1800, they stayed at Caernarfon, travelling via Llanrwst and

Conwy, and making shorter journeys out to the Lakes of Llanberis, Anglesey, Clynnog and Beddgelert. In 1799 they returned through the mountains via the 'rock road' to Tan-y-Bwlch. Father and daughter seem to have felt comfortable making some of their explorations of the area separately: William Hutton was a tough and avid walker; in 1801, aged 78, he would become the first person to walk the length of Hadrian's Wall. He certainly climbed Snowdon and crossed the sands of Traeth Mawr on his own; but (though her use of first person singular and plural can be misleading) Catherine seems to have headed up from Barmouth to Harlech accompanied only by John the servant, and perhaps followed Pennant to Llyn Cwellyn by herself. She too was capable of covering impressive distances, writing to Thomas after her trip to Beddgelert:

Besides the usual types of observations on customs and costumes, language, food, dwellings, and Methodism, the Huttons witnessed two consecutive years of extreme weather conditions, and Catherine's account describes the aftermath of devastating floods in 1799, and a drought in 1800. She also catches occasional slantwise glimpses of people known better from other contexts in Wales, such as the schoolmaster and poet Dafydd Ddu Eryri, and the writer and vicar Peter Bailey Williams. Above all, what carries her through wind and rain and the everyday setbacks of travel as a tourist is an enduringly positive attitude to Welsh people and Welsh culture: 'who, that did not deserve reproof, would disparage the country to its natives; or who, that had eyes to see, and a heart to feel, would speak contemptuously of Wales at all'? (Letter 6, 1796)

There is an intriguing echo here of the well-known 'Triad' penned by the Welsh bard Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg, 1747-1826), who happened to be in Beaumaris in August 1799, and was another witness to the devastation of the flood that swept away bridges and livestock, and left the Huttons battered by wind and rain on the road to Abergwyngregyn (Letter 18, 1799). Williams claimed that a true poet required 'an eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and a resolution that dares follow nature'. Catherine Hutton—observant, sympathetic and determined — certainly possessed all three.

### 1796 Tour

Letter 1, Mallwyd, July 26th 1796; Letter 2, Mallwyd July 27th 1796; Letter 3, Barmouth Aug 4th 1796; Letter 4, Barmouth Aug 7th 1796; Letter 5, Barmouth Aug 12th 1796; Letter 6, Barmouth, Aug 18th 1796; Letter 7, Bala, Sept 2nd 1796; Letter 8, [Llangollen] Sept 3rd 1796; Letter 9, Shrewsbury, Sept 5th 1796.

### 1797 Tour

Letter 10, Llanrwst, Aug 24th 1797; Letter 11, Caernarfon, Aug 27th 1797; Letter 12, Caernarfon, Sept 13th 1797; Letter 13, Caernarfon, Sept 22nd 1797; Letter 14, Caernarfon, Sept 29th 1797; Letter 15, Denbigh, Oct 6th 1797; Letter 16, Chester, Oct 7th 1797; Letter 17, Nantwich, Oct 9th 1797.

### 1799 Tour

Letter 18, Caernarfon Aug 20th 1799; Letter 19, Caernarfon, Aug 30th 1799; Letter 20, Caernarfon Sept 10th 1799; Letter 21, Caernarfon, Sept 14th 1799; Letter 22, Bala, Sept 16th 1799.

### 1800 Tour

Letter 23, Ruthin, Aug 20th 1800; Letter 24, Caernarfon, Aug 28th 1800; Letter 25, Caernarfon Sept 2nd 1800; Letter 26, Caernarfon, Sept 12th 1800; Letter 27, Capel Curig, Sept 18th 1800; Letter 28, Capel Curig, Sept 19th 1800; Letter 29, Shrewsbury, Sept 21st 1800.

The *Monthly Magazine* can be accessed via the Hathi Trust Digital Library.

### 1796 Tour

Letters 1&2, vol 39 (June, 1815) 410-413; Letters 3&4, vol 39 (July 1815) 489-491; Letter 5, vol 40 (Oct 1815), 226-228; Letter 6, vol 40 (January 1816), 503-505; Letter 7, vol 41 (March 1816) 109-111; Letter 8, vol 41 (April 1816), 205-207; Letter 9, vol 41 (May 1816), 304-306.

### 1797 Tour

Letter 10, vol 41 (July 1816) 503-505; Letter 11, vol 42 (Sept 1816) 111-113; Letter 12, vol 42 (Nov 1816) 323-25.

### 1799 Tour

Letter 13, vol 44 (Jan 1818) 496-498; Letter 14, vol 45 (March 1818) 111-113; Letter 15, vol 45 (June 1818) 397-399.

### 1800 Tour

Letter 16, vol 46 (Sept 1818) 128-131; Letter 17, vol 47 (May 1819) 306-308; Letter 18, vol 48 (Aug 1819) 19-22.

- *The Miser Married* (London: Longman, 1813)
- *The Welsh Mountaineer*, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1817).
- *Oakwood Hall*, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1819) Catherine Hutton's *Tour of Africa* (1819–21), a compilation of travel narratives by other writers, was recently reissued in the series *Women's Travel Writings in North Africa and the Middle East*, Part II (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015).
- Catherine Hutton Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century: Letters of Catherine Hutton* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1891).
- William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham, to the End of the Year 1780* (Birmingham: Pearson & Rollason, 1781).
- William Hutton, *Remarks upon North Wales* (Birmingham: Knott and Lloyd, 1803)
- William Hutton, *The Life of William Hutton F.A.S.S, including a Particular Account of the Riots at Birmingham in 1791, to Which Is Subjoined the History of his Family, Written by Himself and Published by his Daughter Catherine Hutton*, 2nd edn (London and Birmingham: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1816).

### Secondary

- Hutton's fiction is briefly discussed in Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (eds), *English and British Fiction 1750–1820: The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, Volume 2 (Oxford: OUP, 2015), pp. 464, 472–75; and more fully by Cheryl A. Wilson in '"Something like mine": Catherine Hutton, Jane Austen, and Feminist Recovery Work', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56.2 (Summer 2015), 151–64. For her wide-ranging correspondence, see Bridget Hill, 'Catherine Hutton (1756–1846): A Forgotten Letter-Writer', *Women's Writing*, 1.1 (1994), 35–50.
- Hutton's Welsh Tours are discussed in three articles by Mary-Ann Constantine: '"The bounds of female reach": Catherine Hutton's fiction and her tours in Wales', *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* , no. 22, 92-105 (Spring 2017)
- 'Celts and Romans On Tour: Visions of early Britain in eighteenth-century travel literature', in Francesca Kaminski-Jones and Rhys Kaminski-Jones (eds) *Celts, Romans, Britons: Classical and Celtic Influence in the Construction of British Identities* (Oxford: OUP, 2020) 117-139
- 'Consumed landscapes: coal, air and circulation in the writings of Catherine Hutton', *Romanticism* Special Issue: 'Change of Air' eds Erin Lafford and Rhys Kaminski-Jones (forthcoming, 2021). Hutton's work also features in Constantine's forthcoming monograph: *Curious Travellers: Writing the Welsh Tour 1720-1820* (Oxford: OUP, 2021).

*My thanks to Liz Edwards for patiently tagging this edition, and above all to Michael Freeman for introducing me to Hutton in the first place.*

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Letter 10[1]

Llanrwst Aug 24 1797

My Dear Brother

You will see me thus on my way to Caernarvon. We have pursued the track of our return last year; Oswestry, Llangollen, and Corwen, and from thence have kept the great road, instead of quitting at the Druid, where we first entered it from Bala.

Our road from the Druid was good; up and down hills; but not great

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hills, the country diversified with fields and woods; a river running on our left. At two miles we ascended a longer hill than the others and found ourselves high above the bed of the river, on a terrace road, cut out of solid rock. The river, whose name I would give you if I could, after running peace^[a]bly along the upper lands, approaches this defile between the mountains, and forces its way to the bottom, dashing over rocks and huge stones. A bridge, called Pont-y-Glyn, the Bridge of the Glen, is thrown from rock to rock over the highest and principal fall, I was told at seventy or eighty feet above the water. [------]

The road is cut at a heighth which made me tremble to look down; though it is fenced by a high strong wall. The rocks rise perpendicularly above it, on the right. From a point near the farther end is ~~xxx~~ discovered the pont, of one noble lofty arch, and the torrent pouring down below it, between the woody mountains. This is the grandest sight I have seen in Wales; and I should ^ think rocks, and woods, and water, can scarcely combine to form anything more beautiful.

From Pont-y-Glyn the country was no longer romantic, but hilly and wild. The road, which was excellent, lay along a valley though upon high ground, and wound round the bottoms of the hills, till it reached Cerrig-y-Druidion, the Rock of the Druids, ten miles beyond Corwen. In this bleak and elevated region, the small driving rain struck upon my face like needle points, and the wind was so high, that I frequently held fast, by both hands, to keep my-self upon my horse.

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Cerrig y Druidion is a considerable Welsh village, with a church, an inn, and a shop; but there is no rock to be seen, or Druid to be heard of. It was now the fair; and about two hundred home-spun coats and blue coats were assembled, in the midst of three or four stalls of cloth, two of earthen ware, and half a dozen of gingerbread and cakes, intermingled with a small number of cattle. About three or four men appeared in broadcloth coats; but not a silk hat or bonnet was to be seen among the women; or a cotton gown, except one upon a dirty trollop,[2] who seemed the refuse of another country. Here, an old woman had a piece of striped woolen under her arm, for sale; there, another had a remnant of linen, or a pair of stockings, the produce of her own industry, and the overplus of the family apparel: but I saw very little buying and selling. Both men and women were chattering in small parties; and the women universally, were knitting. Two harpers and a fidler arrived; and I was ^ informed, that many of the people would dance all night, and some all the next day.

The public house was so crowded we could not enter it; and as for a stable for our horses, we should have been laughed at if we had asked it, for the keffils stood by fifties in little inclosures. Indeed this is a regular piece of Welsh economy; and each person pays a halfpenny for the standing of his horse, except on Sundays, when the churchyard commonly serves for that purpose. We remained therefore out of doors; the servant and horses drawn up at the horse-block, ourselves walking the fair of Cerrig-y-Druidion, and making a part of the shew.

[From Cerrig y Druidion to Cernioge is three miles; two and a half of which appear, at once, in a straight line, over dreary uninhabitable bogs. Cernioge, though the epithet of Mawr, Great, is added

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to it, consists of nothing that I recollect, but the inn, which keeps one or more post-chaises. Its mistress, having attained some degree of refinement by living on the great road, had grafted a bedgown of beautiful printed cotton on the native woolen petticoat of the country, and crowned the whole with a costly, heavy cap of fine muslin and fine lace. The parlour, I believe the only parlour, was occupied, and we fancied the master did not make us very welcome to our post near the kitchen fire, where we took a sandwich and a pint of wine; so I armed myself with a resolution to proceed to Llanrwst, eleven miles farther, and that resolution remained unshaken, though it rained when we set out, and unrepented of, though it continued every step of the way.[3]

The first eight miles of the road was over wild moors; up and down hill but all high ground. At two miles we passed through the village of Capel Voelas, having a church, as its appellation, Capel, denotes. From these high moors I sometimes caught a glimpse of a mountain, as the clouds broke for a moment. Had the weather been clear, the Alps of Caernarvonshire would have stood before me. At the end of the moors, we found ourselves hanging, at an immense h$^{e}$ight over the Vale of Llanrwst].

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The Vale of Llanrwst is composed of grass of the finest verdure, and corn of the richest yellow, divided by green hedges. The river Conwy, not, like the Dee, foaming over its rocky bed, but a placid, though a noble stream, moves majestically along it. White houses, of every description, from the cottage to the palace enliven it, and the town of Llanrwst, with its elegant bridge, appears towards the further end. The whole is encircled by hills, rocks, and woods. Magnificent mountains, with Snowdon at their head, should have risen above these, on the left, if the atmosphere had so pleased. [The approach, over barren hills, and the



sudden appearance of these beauties under our feet, add to the impression $^{\text{they make}}$. Wonder-struck and frightened to see myself so high, I durst not sit upon my horse. It rained terribly! Wet I must be, and wet I chose be, on foot. Father shared my fate, fearing only for me, whilst I felt only for him; we passed three mile stones on the mountain, and a fourth before we reached Llanrwst. An excellent greatcoat, with capes $^{\wedge\ \text{to the elbows}}$, kept the upper part of my person dry; but sure such petticoats were never seen. The water ran in rivulets over the road, and streamed from our cloaths, and by the time we arrived at Llanrwst my greatcoat had imbibed so much I could scarcely carry it. I might have spared myself this heroic atchievement, if my nerves had not been overpowered at the top of the mountain, for the descent was both safe and easy. At Llanrwst I [----] got between two good blankets, till a total change of habits could be provided]. [4]

The inn at Llanrwst is the best I have seen in the country. A Welsh harp welcomed our arrival [---], though we entered on foot, and dropping like the water-works at Chatsworth.[5] The town is ill-looking, and ill-paved. The bridge, of one large centre arch, and a smaller on each side, is the work of Inigo Jones, and deservedly admired for its elegance and lightness. The workmanship is said to be so true, that if you lean against a large stone, in the centre of one of the parapet walls [---], while a person strikes a large stone in the centre of the other [---], you feel the shock. This I experienced. But the truth of the work will probably accelerate its destruction, for the stone has been so often struck that it has given way. The date of the bridge is 1636.

The largest of the white houses that spot the Vale of Llanrwst is Gwidir, a fine old mansion, near the Caernarvonshire foot of the bridge

which gives the title of Baron to the former Sir Peter Burrell. A lofty perpendicular rock, sprinkled with wood, river behind it.

Letter 11

Caernarvon Aug 27 1797

1 6

My Dear Brother,

Having crossed the Conwy, at leaving Llanrwst, we travelled four or five mile along the vale, by its side, under stupendous mountains which rose abruptly on our left. Three torrents, made magnificent by the late rains, poured down from different lakes at top, and, crossing our road, under bridges, rushed into the river. Afterwards, we quitted the Vale of the Conwy and rode over high hills, the mountains receeding to the left, till the top of our last hill presented us with a sight wholly new to me: a town, surrounded by a wall, with battlements and towers, seemingly perfect; and, situated on the side of a sloping hill before us, we saw the whole at once. The beautiful castle of Conwy rose upon a rock at one end. I viewed the scene with admiration, and could almost have imagined myself transported back to the days of Edward the First.

[Conwy is only two miles from the sea, to which the river makes an opening; but its winding course, and the elevation of its banks, do not permit the sea to be seen.][7]

There are only two entrances into the town of Conwy, one from the land, and one from the water, both arched gateways in the wall. We had no sooner passed through the former of these than we were attacked by a sort of hostler who offered to conduct us to the inn; and, without further ceremony, laid hold of the bridle of one of the horses. I desired him to let go his hold, and supposing, from eagerness, that there were two inns, and remembering the old adage Good wine needs no bush I determined not to be directed by him. As both were unknown to me, we enquired of a man we met in the street which was the best. Whether he had been bribed I know not, but he named the Bull, the house the scout was sent from, and thither we went. We found a large



house and a good dinner. With our lodging we had less reason to be satisfied, and if I go to Conwy again, I shall try the Harp.

I am told that the Harp is the old house, and the Bull, the new; and that the Bull has taken this extraordinary method of sending out its emissaries to forestall travellers, in order to supplant its rival. The Harp, in its own defence, had adopted the same plan; and it has happened more than once, when the contending parties have met, that they have come to an engagement, and the vanquished obliged to retreat, with a black eye or bloody nose. It is even said, that the mistress of the Bull[8] has defeated the chambermaid of the Harp in single combat.

Conwy was the first Welsh town in which I observed an air of industry, and a greater number of people appeared in its streets than any I had seen before; yet their staple article is the entertainment of travellers and its principal trade is to convey them across the river: I need not tell you that over that river lies the high road from London to Holyhead. At high water, it is nearly a mile in breadth.[9]

The beauty of Conwy Castle; the strength of its towers; the elegance of its turrets; the magnificence of its great hall; the wonder of the tower still standing, though its base, a mighty ruin, is long since prostrate on the shore; and its charming situation, viewed from either land or water, - have been often described. It is well they have, for I do not at present think of any words to do them justice.

From Llanrwst to Conwy is twelve miles. Our course had been due north. Our road from thence to Bangor and Caernarvon, was at first west, and then inclining to the south; but insuperable mountains forbade our taking a nearer way. Two miles and a half of steep, hilly

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road, brought us from Conwy to S#chnant, the top of a pass over the mountains down to the straights of Menai. From whence the sea, Puffin or Priestholm Island, and the Isle of Anglesey opened upon us at once. The descent is steep, on the brink of a precipice, but secured by a wall. The smacking of a whip, reverberated by the opposite mountain, sounded like a shower of stones.

From the bottom of this pass to Caernarfon, the road lies on the shore of the Menai, and is constantly up and down hill, though neither long together, except at Penmaen Mawr. There is every where cultivated lands between the mountains and the straits, except, as before excepted, at Penmaen Mawr, ~~which is~~ a huge promontory jutting into the sea, and the road climbs up its side. Much has been said of this tremendous road, and frightful, as well as dangerous, it must have been; as it runs very high above the sea, with a steep precipice on one hand, and an impenetrable rock on the other; but it is now fixed with a stone wall, which has the peculiar advantage of being cemented with mortar. In one place, however, it has given way, though arches are turned under the road to afford a passage for the water that comes down from the mountain. Pains are taken to remove the rocks that from time to time fall down upon the road, but I saw enough remaining, propped, or hanging by a thread, to make me wish to avoid travelling that way when they had been loosened by rain or frost.

The sixth mile stone from Conwy is above Penmaen Mawr, and the whole of the road over it may be about a mile and a half.

At nine miles from Conwy we rode through Aber, where is a Welsh inn,[10] under the mountains. At thirteen miles we crossed the Ogwen, and saw an opening on our left, through which that river comes down through the mountains. Before us, on a hill, was the church of Llandegai, handsome

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for a village church, any where, but in Wales a prodigy. On the right was the mansion of Lord Penrhyn; all about it proclaiming the riches and taste of its noble owner.

Bangor, six miles beyond Aber and nine short of Caernarvon, would only be noticed as a neat little Welsh town, if it were not an episcopal see, which, I suppose, confers upon it the rank of city. It is environed by hills that shut it out from the Menai. The cathedral is respectable, though its tower steeple is low. A steeple of any kind, however, is a mark of dignity in this country. The Bishop’s palace and the Deanery are its accompaniments, and are a couple of snug, warm situations. The tombs are black stone of a remarkably fine texture, resembling Wedgwood’s tea-pots.[11] As the sculptor might have gone in vain to the Herald’s office, for the titles of the dead, he has gone to their occupations, and is content with informing the world, that one was a mercer, another a grocer, and another a taylor ~~of this parish~~.

At Caernarvon the first thing one meets with is the Hotel, a house built by Lord Uxbridge, and such as his lordships self might live in. It is kept by an Englishman, and is frequented by all English travellers. The Welsh stick to a good old King's Head of their own, farther in the town.

Caernarvon Castle is the finest I have seen. The guide who shewed it assured us it was the finest in Great Britain. Whether he was qualified to make the assertion, I doubt, but xx I am not qualified to disprove it, ^and I see no reason why I may not implicitly believe it. The principal entrance is in the side next the town, and has the statue of Edward the First, its founder, high above it.[12] The gate by which Eleanor entered to give the Welsh a Welshman for their prince is at the end next to what is called the Castle Green, and the Eagle Tower, where that prince was born, is at the opposite end. The walls of that tower are nine feet and a half in thickness; the whole must have been a place of prodigious strength. All the windows

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that look towards the country or the sea, are slips through which the soldiers could point their arrows, without fear of annoyance in return: those within the castle walls are beautiful gothic windows, with frames of stone. One only remains intire.

The town of Caernarfon, like that of Conwy, is surrounded by a wall. ~~The side of the castle forms one end of the inclosure.~~ The inclosed space was not originally intended for its present purpose, but was an area belonging to the castle; and the town was half-a-mile further up the country. When the castle was no longer necessary to keep the Welsh in awe, ~~the walls that proceeded from it were thought by the inhabitants to be some security for~~ the town. ~~It accordingly~~ moved its station, and pitched in the castle yard, where it consists of one straight and tolerably wide street, with an arched gateway at each end [-----], and three or four smaller ones which cross it at right angles. A long irregular street, without the walls, is the high road, and a few mean ones proceed from it, towards the country. On the outside the wall, towards the Menai, and close to it, is a beautiful gravel walk.

The church disdained to follow the town in its peregrination. It remains near the scite of Old Caernarvon, which is plainly discernible, though there is not one stone left upon another. The church is called the church of Llanbeblic. It is built in the form of a cross, and has a tower steeple, but the regularity of the edifice is destroyed by a chapel that runs out from the north side of the chancel which was erected to cover the remains of Griffith, lord of Vaenol. He and his lady, in white marble, lie on a tomb within, he in armour and trunk hose, she in the dress she wore.[13] The figures are well executed and I could not help admiring the neatness of the white marble mat on which they lay. The date, 1543, is still legible on the tomb, but the inscriptions, arms, and even

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the features are defaced, not only by the rude hand of time, but hands still more mischievous. Vaenol is on the shore of the Menai, about four miles from Caernarvon. The present lord is Ashton Smith Esqr .

Were I a great Welsh heiress, descended from the Madogs and Molwynogs of the country, I would not change my name for that of Oakley or Smith. If I could not, like Lady Penrhyn, marry into my own family, I would, at least, give myself and my possessions to one of my countrymen.

Letter 12

Caernarvon, Sept 13 1797

My Dear Brother,

I am sorry ^that I must confine my good opinion of the people of Wales to those who have had little intercourse with the English. Some years ago a few persons of taste and curiosity visited the noble scenery of Wales. They found the inhabitants simple and honest; the accommodations very indifferent; and the roads almost impracticable. From the report of these, other tourists have followed; till they have come in swarms; and these chiefly the rich and the great. The consequence has been that the roads are improved; the farms are raised; money is introduced; and the people are rapacious. An honest Welsh clergyman lamented to me that the English Mountain-hunters have his country so dear that he ~~cannot~~ ^could not afford to live in it. Four or five of the principal inns on this road are kept by Englishmen, who set an example to the natives. They are only inferior to the English inns in convenience, accommodations, and attendance: not at all in expence. I am sorry for it; the English will improve the country and spoil the inhabitants.

One instance of that English magnificence which teaches the Welsh

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not to under rate their services, we heard from the poor old Barber who shews the castle. He had just gone over it with ^ a party of three gentlemen, who had given him three half crowns for his trouble. He would gladly have mowed the beards of ninety of his countrymen for the same sum! And an instance of their profiting by the lesson I had from a young man, who hired a sorry keffil at Caernarvon for a day to visit Beddgelert, twelve miles distant, and, on his return, in the evening, the owner charged him ten shillings.

Caernarvon, though it seems to a stranger half Welsh and half English, is not so; there are few Englishmen reside in it, and still fewer women. All the trades-people, all the poor people, all the sailors, are Welsh. Many of the gentry are Irish. It was a matter of surprize to me, when I first came, to find so large a number of lodgings, and so ^ small a number of sea-bathers. But I understand that it is common for the Irish to live too fast in their own country, and to come here to live back again. They are, however, of such a social and convivial turn, that when a number of them meet, they dine drink, and play, and are obliged to quit Caernarvon, for the same reason.

The introduction of travellers and riches has made an odd jumble in the dress of the middling class of women here. They mingle the cotton manufacturers of Manchester with their own wool, and often hold up a gown with all the colours of the rainbow to display a petticoat of the original striped woolen of the country.

The poor people live in wretched huts, in the suburbs, though they join each other, and form a street. They have often but one room, which holds the family day and night. The floor is unpaved, or rudely laid with large stones, and the light is admitted by one shabby window, but the door is always open; and one sees the mother and frequently the grand

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mother spinning or knitting, and the finest rosy children that imagination can conceive playing around them. To say nothing of the pigs, for they are joint tenants, as well as free of the city. They are invariably clad (that is, not the pigs but the women) in a woolen bedgown and petticoat. Some have coarse shoes and no stockings; many have stockings that reach to the foot, and fasten by a loop round the second toe, and no shoes. Patched garments are often seen, ragged ones scarcely ever.

I have already said that the Methodists of North Wales are very numerous. They have a general meeting once a year, alternately at Caernarvon and Pwllheli; when they assemble out of doors; for no building could contain them. On these occasions their ministers preach to them successively, till they are wrought up to such a pitch of enthusiasm,

that they first groan and distort their features; then throw their heads about; then their arms; and then they begin to jump; which they continue to do so long, and with such violence, that the women have been known to jump out of their hats, caps, and handkerchiefs, and, almost, out of their petticoats. [----------]

The market at Caernarvon is much crowded, but many of the articles of sale are not regularly supplied. They are brought by the country people round and are, as at the fair of Cerig y Druidion, the overflowing of the family. One brings to market bread, another cheese, another oat cakes, ^ poultry, shoes, with wooden soles, a pair of woolen stockings, a remnant of linsey, a roll of flannel, vegetables, gooseberries, apples, or mats, halters or horse furniture, made of fine rushes. Buttermilk

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and potatoes never fail. Money will not purchase the whole of what you see. I once inquired the price of a basket of eggs. The woman wanted to barter them for yeast. Another basket was only to be exchanged for old linen to wrap a little stranger in, whom its owner expected soon to bring into the world.

On market day the country people pour into Caernarvon on horseback, six women at least, to one man. Sometimes the keffil carries wooden boxes, with covers, on each side; sometimes coarse wicker panniers, sometimes the woman ^ has only a basket on her arm; but I have a notion it often happens that the whole lading is not worth half-a-crown. If she be a poor woman, she turns her horse loose into a wide part of the street, from whence he is never known to stray; if one of the better sort, she pays a penny for his standing in a small paddock. In either case he waits for her ready bridled and saddled, till the afternoon if not the evening. Oats are a luxury the poor beasts never know, they are meat for their masters; and, I daresay, they are never indulged with a morsel of hay while it is possible for skin and bone to pick a scanty subsistence off the ground. The country people carry back ~~hats~~ the small part of their apparel ^ made of cotton, the few luxuries they can afford to purchase, and any of their neighbours who may chance to be on foot, for sparing the poor horse is an idea that never enters their heads.

There is a printing press at Caernarvon; I believe the only one in North Wales,[14] except one at Wrexham; and there are all sorts of shop-keepers, in a creditable style. But the grand article of commerce at Caernarvon is the slates, which are brought down from the mountains and piled up by millions on the quay, waiting their turn to be shipped off. Caernarvon is an encreasing town, and land for building upon, difficult to be got.

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The weather, since I have been here, has been one continued storm. You know I do not hope to climb mountains; for high places are as much forbidden to me now, as they were to the children of Israel of old. I look at those which form a chain near this place with awe, almost with reverence. I long to see the beautiful scenes they inclose, and have made two attempts to reach them; but have been glad to escape from approaching rain. There is a fatality attends my designs on the mountains, and such is the impression they have made on my mind, that I sometimes think I should not dare to look on them, if I were there.

Snowdon, though only nine miles distant, cannot be seen from Caernarvon, or any place in its immediate vicinity, being intercepted by a large round smooth mountain, called Moel Elian. I pay my daily devotion to one of his sons from the top of a rocky hill, that rises at the back of the Hotel, and think myself very fortunate if I can see a small part of the object of my adoration, which emerges from behind that mountain; but in general, like other idolators, I worship in the dark.

Letter 13

Caernarvon, Sept 22, 1797

My Dear Brother,

At last I have got among these mountains, so long the objects of my ardent curiosity. I have seen the Lakes of Llanberris, which fill the space between two of the most magnificent ranges of them, and I have been to Beddgelert and Pont Aber Glaslyn. In the first of these vales the foot of Snowdon is close on the right hand; in the second, on the left. In my way to the Lakes of Llanberris, and about two miles from this place, I crossed the river which issues out of them, and into the sea here. By dint of inquiries I have found out that its true name is the St Helen's[15]

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and that it is vulgarly called the Seont. In its short course it is crossed by three bridges. This is Pont Rûg; the next, on the road to Beddgelert, is Pont Newyd; and the third, on the road to Pwllheli, is Pont Saint. In the centre of Pont Rûg is an iron plate, with this inscription, Harry Parry, the modern Inigo, erected this bridge 1770[16]. The bridge has one noble arch, and for aught I know, the work of the modern Inigo may be worthy of the first.

Between one and two miles farther, a gate opens into a large tract of rocky land, that has no barrier to divide it from the mountains, and the road across it is like a rugged, ill-paved street. You will here observe that, in this country, nature lets herself down softly. After producing tremendous mountains, she forms rocky hills, and then, rugged, broken ground, until she reaches the sea. A hollow in this range of hills, I now got over, and on the other side had a view of the Lakes of Llanberis. They were closely hemmed in by the mountains; Snowdon distinguished from the rest by its summit being covered by a cloud. The place is called Cwm y Glo: I believe, the Hollow of the Glowing Coal. For what reason I know not. It contains a few poor houses.

After another week of storms, I found a fine morning, and set out for Beddgelert with Pennant's description of the road, as far as Snowdon, in my pocket, as well as my head; for, fearful of missing the grand object of my research, I transcribed it before I left home. I passed the church of Llanbeblic, and after crossing the Seont at Pont Newyd, I passed Glandwna, a house and estate lately purchased by an English gentleman, who is shewing the Welsh what English money and English skill can perform in agriculture.[17]

The road keeps still ascending. At about three miles on the right is a large old uninhabited house so completely covered in ivy that ^ it seems built of green leaves. Still ascending, I came to a continuation of the

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rocky open ground I had crossed on my way to the Lakes of Llanberis, and then went down into a valley where I found an excellent road between two green hedges, a river and a bridge. I now began to con my lesson. Crossed the Fai or Gwyrfai at Pont y Bettws (the Bridge of the Bead-house, or religious house). Went through the village of Bettws. Under Moel Elian, a round, smooth, stupendous mountain covered with smooth green turf. By the Lake Cwellyn, which here almost fills the valley. Above, on the right, soars the magnificent Mynnydd Vawr, but the sides receeding inwards, exhibiting a tremendous precipice. Soon after the vale expands, and y Wyddfa appears in full view. Nothing could be more correct than this description. I had passed the Gwyrfai at Pont y Bettws; I had passed through the village of Bettws, which is situated directly under Moel Elian, and consists of about half a dozen houses and a church. The road still proceeded along the bottom, and crossed innumerable little torrents, which, in this rainy season, rush down the mountains. On the right was a few starved meadows, now half under water, and beyond these, Mynnedd Vawr, well deserving the epithet Magnificent. In front, at the end of the vale, was Nant mill, and a beautiful cascade, not high, but broad and rapid. At the mill the road wound suddenly to the left, and I entered the margin of Cwellyn Pool. I rode more than a mile by its side. Having passed the lake I rode on; the vale instead of expanding became

narrower. Where was y Wyddfa? Mountains upon mountains could I see, but no Wyddfa, though there was not a cloud in the atmosphere! [---] I had passed that too! I, who knew Snowdon so well, who had seen it on two sides, and had contemplated it four days together on one of them when I was in Merionethshire, had ridden over its base, not without seeing it, but without knowing it was Snowdon. To this error two or three circumstances might contribute. I now saw Snowdon on a third side, where its appearance was

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different. It is a mighty mountain among others, which, from the bottom, appear almost as great. Had I been on the summit, it would have had no competitor. And, with due submission to Pennant, whom nobody admires more than myself, I think he helped to mislead me; for the Vale expands, and y Wyddfa appears, not after the Lake Cwellyn but before it. The foot of the mountain is the side of the lake, and the guide's house is at the head of it; from whence the most common and most easy ascent begins. ^ It is three miles and three quarters to the summit. The lake was now a beautiful, still water, and the mountains reflected on it made almost its whole surface green. It is something less than a quarter of a mile in breadth. When I discovered ^ my error I was still descending with the River Colwyn to Beddgelert.

From the moment we enter Bettws there is no losing the way, no turning to the right or left. It is a continued defile between two ranges of mountains, that I believe never recede from each other half a mile. At the upper end of Cwellyn there is a pass on the right called Drws y Coed, but it is so insignificant I did not see it. It leads through the Nant or Vale of Nantlle, passes by two small lakes in the vale, called Llyniau Nantlle, and ends at the village of Llanllyfni, in the road from Caernarvon to Penmorfa and Criccaeth. I believe it can only be explored on foot. In this unfrequented and almost inaccessible Vale of Nantlle is a farm so considerable that it keeps three hundred goats, two thousand sheep, and a dairy of thirty cows; besides fourscore head of other cattle. It produces oats, but neither wheat nor barley will ripen.

At Beddgelert is the first visible opening in the mountains. It is the junction of three vales. The rivers Colwyn and Glaslyn make each one, and they join together to form a third. Two or three miles below, the united waters rush into the sea, at Traeth Mawr.

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Beddgelert is beautifully situated among a few fertile meadows, embosomed in lofty mountains. It contains a church and several houses, one of which is a decent inn. As I contemplated the tombstones in the churchyard, and considered the age of man, I found that, among the mountains, as in populous cities, his term is limited; the number of his years, which he cannot pass, and I have not been able to ascertain that local circumstances materially shorten or extend his days.

The origin of the name Beddgelert has been detailed in verse and prose. Such places are probably not to be found in Wales alone; for I remember meeting with a similar story in the studies of my infancy. I think, in that famous book, The Seven Wise Masters.[18]

A Prince of Wales, on his return from hunting, was met by his favourite dog, who had been left behind: the animal expressed his joy, on seeing his master, by every means that eyes, and paws, and tail could devise. Not so the master. He observed that the dog was covered with blood, and he saw that the cradle of his only son was overturned on the floor. "Wretch!" cried he, "thou hast killed my son!" He drew his sword, and, as retributive justice demanded, killed the dog. He then did what he might as well have done before - he took up the cradle to examine into the particular circumstances of the fact, and found the boy unhurt, and a dead serpent lying near him. Concluding that the dog had slain the serpent in the child's defence, and touched with remorse for having destroyed the dog, he resolved to make

him all the amends now in his power. He interred him honourably, and erected a church over his remains. It was called Bedd, which to this day in Welsh signifies Grave; and Gelert was the name of the dog.

From Beddgelert I walked to Pont Aber Glaslyn, a mile and a half

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distant, which is reckoned one of the wonders of Wales. The bridge itself is not particularly striking, but the scenery above it forms the grandest spectacle I ever saw. The river descends in perpetual cascades, and foams among enormous rocks, through a chasm [-----] between mountains of a stupendous height. It fills the whole space, at the bottom; the road being cut out of the rock, a little above it. When I looked up, scarcely could my aching eyes reach the tops of the mountains; yet halfway up. On one side, was a man, reduced to a puppet, burning fern; a more dreadful trade than gathering samphire on Dover Cliff.[19]

If I were to form a comparison between Pont Aberglaslyn and Pont y Glyn, I should say, that one was wildly grand, the other exquisitely beautiful. The first is a dashing river, and the look ^ up is tremendous; the second is a smaller river, and the look down is to its narrow rocky channel, sprinkled, and sometime almost hidden, by wood.

I stood upon Pont Aber Glaslyn and congratulated myself on having seen that, and Tan y Bwlch, without either passing the seven miles of rock road above, or fording the Traeth below, which divides them. [----] From the bridge I saw the beginnings of the sands of Traeth Mawr.

At Beddgelert begins the Nant Gwynan, from which the Glaslyn comes down from its source on Snowdon. It is reckoned the most picturesque vale in Wales, and contains two lovely lakes. It is with sorrow I say I have not seen it. I would willingly have walked a few miles up it, but I was informed the beginning was not worth my pains, and the ^ beautiful part was out of my reach. The lakes are six or seven miles a

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bove Beddgelert. I just looked into Nant Gwynan, and saw a narrow glen between the mountains, with a road paved with stones from the size of an orange to that of a flag, laid in all directions, hills, and hollows, and grass growing out of every crevice. The Welsh horses travel it in safety, and I saw a man ride along it with a composure that I envied; but I believe no Englishman would even walk it, without looking, where he must next place his foot.

A very worthy and intelligent gentle-man of Caernarvon, whose profession leads him all over the county, and who never went the same road twice, while another remained that led to the same place, allows the road up Nant Gwynan to be very bad, but says there is one over the mountains to the right of that vale, which goes to Dolwyddelan, which is the worst he ever saw. On my return from Beddgelert I saw Snowdon in perfection; every atom of his vast surface was visible, and, to make amends for my former neglect, I looked at him as if I would get acquainted with every atom.

I hope you are not so much fatigued with my excursion as I was. I was ten hours out, nine of which I was on foot, or on horseback. My stockings were shattered, my feet were blistered, and I was almost ready to prove, according to the opinion of some great philosophers, that man is a quadruped, by crawling on all fours.

Letter 14

Caernarvon, Sept 29, 1797

My Dear Brother,

This is a gala day at Caernarvon; a kind of city feast, at chusing the magistrates. But the city is saved the expence of it, by the liberality of a neighbouring nobleman, who out of gratitude for their not voting in direct opposition to his wishes at an election, indulges about a hundred Welshmen, once a year, with as much good eating as

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they can cram, and more good drinking than they can carry. The ladies have a ball.

The shore at Caernarvon is pebbles; but, as the descent is pretty quick, the bathers are soon in the water. What are called bathing machines on the English part of the coast are here, as well as at Barmouth, with strict propriety, called bathing houses: for if the term machine imply motion, which I apprehend it does, these have no title to the name, though they have wheels. They are merely used for dressing and undressing, and the bathers have to walk from them to the water, and into the water, be the same more or less. On the flat shore of Barmouth, it could not well be more, if one bathed at low water. At both places the nothing is regulated by the tide, to prevent the inconvenience of a long promenade. At Barmouth, the sea-guide gives you a total immersion, if you chuse it, by pouring on your head a bucket full of salt water. I shall never forget my feelings on the occasion. I would have cried out for mercy, but I could not speak; and I would have run away but I could not move. I could only stand still and sob ~~violently~~ piteously.

In fine weather the Welsh ladies frequently prefer undressing in the open air to being shut up in a bathing house. They sit down on the shore, and exchange their cloaths for the bathing dress, and the bathing dress for their cloaths, with a decency and dexterity that leaves them nothing to fear; as they do not fear catching cold.

The civility of the Welsh bathing women it is unnecessary to mention. It is the trade of these people, everywhere, to be civil. And as most females look up to them for protection when they have their powerful element to contend with, it gives them an opportunity to throw in a little kindness. At Scarborough they carry this to such a pitch that they call you my lady, my love, and my honey, in the same breath.

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At Barmouth I asked our sea-guide, Gwinnah,[20] how old she was? She could have told me in Welsh, in a moment, but the question puzzled her English arithmetic. She hesitated, and answered: “Twelve above twenty, and two above that.”

Accidents appear to me frequent at Caernarvon. During my short stay, I have seen a mother led along the street, in agonies for her drowned child; and a number of sailors searching the sands, at low water, for the body of their drowned comrade.

The church at Llanbeblic is crowded with tombs, almost every poor person affording a slate, laid flat upon a little brick and mortar, to tell the passenger he lived and died. I saw only two inscriptions at all remarkable, and these only as they related to particular customs. The first was:

Here lieth the body of Robert Ap Richard of Caernarvon, Glazier, who died the 5 day of June 1703. Aged 44 years.

This was before the Welsh had fully obeyed the order to assume sirnames. Ap Richard was the son of Richard, and his son probably took the sirname of Pritchard.

The other was exactly as follows.

Underneath

Lie the remains of Elizapeth

Piter wife of Ropert Rowland

Who departed this life April the 28th 1790

Aged 80

It should seem by this that the Welsh women, like the Scotch, do not always go by the names of their husbands. Elizabeth Peter was still so called, though the wife of Robert Rowland. Whether this is a general custom among the lower sort of people I know not.

I do not give the latter inscription as a specimen of common Welsh orthography; for I have not, in Wales, seen anything like it.

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The profession of the bard is not extinct in north Wales; though I believe some other occupation is generally annexed to it, to procure a livelihood. The Welsh still have Bards, who compose extempore verses, and sing them to the harp; and, as one of the most celebrated of ancient times was denominated, Rhys Coch yr Eiryri, Rhys the Red, of Snowdon, so one of the most celebrated of the present day is called Dafydd Dû, yr Amlwch, David the Black, of Amlwch;[21] from their respective complexions, and places of residence. These Bards form themselves into societies, and elect a president; who, at their meetings, gives a subject, upon which each man present makes verses, without hesitation. Those which the president deems the best are intitled to a prize. The Welsh say, that some of these compositions of the moment have great merit; but that they lose much on being translated into English.

On the opposite side of the river at Caernarvon is a summer house, which crowns the top of a steep hill, covered with wood. It is, itself, a distinguished object and commands an extensive view both of sea and land. [xxxxxxxxxxxx].[22] The place is called Coed Ellen, the Wood of Helen. If you have any desire to become acquainted with this female saint, the lady patroness of both wood and river, I must inform you that she is Helen, the mother of Constantine.

But ask me no further I beseech you, lest I betray my ignorance; for though I have read

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I think of Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine, I never heard of her travels Wales.[23]

I have walked from the quay at Caernarvon, by the side of the river, up to Pont Saint, and from thence have accompanied it to Pont Newyd. I endeavoured to trace it up to Pont Rûg, but bogs and impenetrable brushwood compelled me to return. Its banks are generally steep and woody, with now and then a meadow. A carriage road runs

along the Coed Ellen side of the river, and joins the Pwllheli road at Pont Saint. The end of the avenue is closed by a mill which is an object truly picturesque.

We leave this place next Wednesday, and leave it with the pleasant conviction that Wales is not always so inhospitable as we first found it. Settled fair weather is settled here also, but stormy weather falls with a tenfold vengeance. Numberless are the people that go to see Snowdon; but it is the lot only of a few favoured mortals to say they have seen it. Many, in climbing it, have been overtaken by torrents of rain and gusts of wind that have obliged them to creep on their hands and knees; or cling to the rock, or their guide, to prevent their being blown down the precipices. I believe the reasons of the imperfect accounts given of Snowdon are, first, because few can see it when they get there; and, secondly, because the few that can think of nothing but how they can get down.

Letter 15

Denbigh, Oct 6th, 1797

My Dear Brother,

Our road as far as Conwy was the same that brought us to Caernarvon. At Conwy we exchanged our accommodation for the Harp, where we met with good accommodation and civil treatment from the honest Innkeeper, +its master.[2] The best Harper I have heard in Wales made me afraid to use my teeth at dinner, lest they should interrupt the office of

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my ears.

We intended yesterday morning to have sent our horses four miles higher up the river to the Pont at Tal y Cefn, rather than have had them dragooned into the ferry boat at Conwy, as they were wholly unaccustomed to the water. But moderate measures succeeded; they entered the ferry without much difficulty, and we followed in the mail boat.

The mail boat is moored with a running rope, and is always afloat. The passengers cross the river in all weathers and at all tides, but persons who can wait seldom chuse to go at less than half flood, or more than half ebb, on account of the wet sands they would have to walk over.

I look with admiration on the mechanism of the mail-coaches. Not on the construction of their wheels and springs, ~~though the motion produced by these is as easy as anything, except sailing~~, but on the whole, considered as one grand machine, pervading every part of the kingdom, and governed by invariable laws. As an individual, I never tried them but once. I was then struck with the singularity of finding the horses or the dinner waiting our arrival at the different inns, according as we were to proceed, or refresh ourselves, instead of having them to bespeak. It reminded me of those scenes of enchantment, where the castle door stands open, and the table is spread, before the stranger has even time to signify his wishes. I own I was also struck with another circumstance – as decent people do, sometimes, travel in stage-coaches; and as all, probably, pay for what they eat and drink, I was surprised that they should be regarded, at inns, as vagrants, who were whipped from town to town.

The Holyhead mail-coach leaves London at seven o clock in the evening, and reaches Holyhead about the same hour next morning but

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one; performing a journey of two hundred and eighty two miles in forty-eight hours. The fare is five guineas each person for the whole way, or sixpence per mile for any part. Each passenger pays a shilling at Conwy ferry, and the same at Bangor ferry. The packets from Holyhead to Dublin are fine sloops of 70 tons burthen. I saw one at Caernarvon, wainscoted with mahogany, elegantly fitted up and furnished. They can carry a hundred persons each, but they only have sixteen beds. They are each allowed fourteen hands, though four would be sufficient to navigate the vessel. They are fast sailors, and will live in any sea, provided they have room. Indeed I was told there never was an instance of one being lost. For if it happened that they could not make the post for which they were bound, they were always bound to run into some other. They undergo a thorough examination once a year, when every failing is repaired, and as far as possible, prevented. The passage to or from Dublin, is a guinea.

But I forget I had just crossed the river Conwy.

We rode a short way along the Denbighshire bank of the river, and then turned to the left, up a narrow marshy road. [xxxxxx] The old road continued along this vale till it ended in the Irish Sea, and then bore to the right, along a great promontory called Penmaen Rhos, where it was more terrific and dangerous than over Penmaen Mawr itself.[24] Fortunately for us, the new ^ road turned to the right before we reached it. We wound round the hills, and crossed them at what might be termed a miniature bwlch, and reached the sea by a shorter, as well as an easier way.

I believe Penmaen Rhos to have been the place where the unfortunate Richard the second was betrayed by the Earl of Northumberland, because I know no other [xxx] that answers that description.

History says that when Henry Duke of Hereford, who then assumed the

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title of Duke of Lancaster, and soon after, that of Henry the fourth, had proceeded as far as Chester, and when Richard the second, abandoned by his troops and [xxx] followers, had fled for refuge to Conwy castle; that Richard sent two noblemen to Henry, offering to resign his crown, and retire to private life, if his person might be safe. His ambassadors were not suffered to return. The Archbishop of Canterbury represented to Henry that it would be very difficult to take the King in such a country as Wales where the mountains afforded numerous retreats inaccessible to an army; and advised that he should decoy his fallen sovereign by treachery. The Earl of Northumberland was sent to Conwy Castle, where he obtained an audience of the King, and swore, upon the sacrament, that if he would dismiss his evil counsellors, whom he named, and accompany him to Chester; the Duke of Lancaster would fall on his knees and ask for mercy. He assured him also that the Duke had taken the same oath.

In an evil hour Richard quitted his castle, deemed impregnable, and his vessels, which might have conveyed him out of the reach of his revolted subjects, and crossed the Conwy, with only sixteen followers. He had not ridden more than four miles when he saw a body of armed men under a rock. The King perceived the snare into which he had fallen, and upbraided Northumberland with the breach of his oath. The Earl endeavoured to excuse himself by saying he had appointed the soldiers to meet them, only to guard the king's person. The king replied there needed not so many; and that by his oath he was bound not to have more than the five who had accompanied him to Conwy. Northumberland then threw off the mask, and told the king that since he had him, he would keep him.

The sea beat on one side of the ill-advised and ill-fated monarch; impenetrable rocks rose on the other; a thousand lances and archers stood before him; and to return was impossible. He came down from the rock

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and surrendered himself to the traitor, who obliged him to take a little wine and bread; took him to R#ddlan castle to dinner, and to Flint castle to lodge; where, the next morning, he was met by his adversary. – My indignation is roused by the two first peers of the realm, spiritual and temporal, the one contriving, and the other executing, so base a trick!

From the time we reached the sea till we arrived at Abergeleu, our road was that of Richard. I saw no rock likely to have been the scene of this infamous transaction. On the contrary, we had fields of corn and grass, and even trees, which did not seem to suffer by the sea breezes. Penmaen Rhos is such a rock. There, the sea would beat on the king's left, the mountain would rise on his right, and the soldiers might be hidden from his view, till they were just under him, by the projection of the rock.

After passing over a steep hill the country diminished in beauty and at eight miles from Conwy we came to a village, the name of which I inquired. The man answered, in English, "Black-and-Blue." We concluded that he was a Welsh wit, who had a mind to divert himself at our expence, and rode on. Not quite satisfied, however, we repeated our question to the next man, who answering Llandûlas, we were convinced of the ingenuity of our first informer. On mentioning the circumstance at Abergeleu, we were told that the name of the place was really Llandûlas, the signification of which in English was the Parish of Black and Blue.[25] We then found our Welshman, instead of his wit, only shewed his learning. If the village takes its name from a patron saint, as most of the Welsh villages do, it is reasonable to suppose that Dûlas must have been some distinguished pugilist.

At eleven miles from Conwy we came to Abergeleu situated in a flat country, backed by hills that have lost all title to the name of mountains. The town is poor, but must be pleasant enough

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when enlivened by sea-bathers. The sea is a mile distant. The shore is low, but the view is grand. One seems to look upon the unlimited ocean from the centre of a capacious bay, formed by Penmaen Rhôs on one hand and a headland which shoots out from the Vale of Clwyd, on the other. The town and castle of Rhyddlan are plainly seen, under the latter, at the distance of four or five miles. The town looks pitiful, the castle respectable. Its circular towers resemble those of Harlech.

At Abergeleu we quitted the coast, and passed through the village of Llansansior, or Llan St George; the first English saint I have met with in Wales. The Welsh have a calendar of their own. Soon after, we rode by Kinmael, the seat of Mr Hughes, beautifully situated on the side of a hill, and commanding half the Vale of Clwyd.

The Vale of Clwyd is about twenty-six miles long, and six wide. It is bounded, at the upper end, by the mountains of Yale, which separate it from the parish of Corwen. At the lower, it is open to the sea. On each side it is inclosed by a continued chain of hills, not divided, like the mountains of Caernarvonshire, but rising from one base, though with different summits. I am told that the whole eastern side has only one narrow outlet, without climbing the hills. There are four market towns in the Vale of Clwyd: - Rhyddlan, St Asaph, Denbigh, and Ruthin. The remains of castles are still seen at all, except St Asaph. The villages I cannot enumerate. Gentleman's houses, some of which wear the appearance of palaces, meet the eye every moment; and the dwellings of the farmers look comfortable and convenient. The fields are beautiful, the woods are fine; the surface of the ground is variegated, the soil is a rich dark mould.

I am told that land in the Vale of Clwyd lets, on an average, at 2l. [£2] an acre; that one large farm is even let for 3l. 10s. and the occupier has made a fortune. Bold[26] pieces of land are frequently let as high as 6l. an acre; and when land of any description is to be let, it is sought after

with avidity, and obtained with difficulty. The inhabitants of the Vale [xxxx] consume about a sixteenth part of its produce. the hills that inclose it are cultivated to nearly two-thirds of their height. In one point only the Vale of Clwyd is deficient, and in all other parts of Wales that I have seen that deficiency is an exuberance; the vale itself is scantily watered, and the towns, being built on hills rising out of it, have no water at all.

Rhyddlan I have seen only at a distance.

St Asaph is the seat of an episcopal see; and poorer, and even smaller, than Bangor. The cathedral is full as good, and the choir neatly fitted up.

Denbigh, the capital of the county, is a tolerably large and decent looking town, on the side of a steep rock. The castle formerly occupied the summit, but part of the area is now a bowling green, from whence the view, comprehending all the lower, and much of the upper part of the Vale of Clwyd is magnificent. The castle is in a very ruined state, but from the shapeless mass that remains, and the walls of prodigious thickness, it appears to have been a place of great strength. The entrance, a grand arch, is still intire, with the figure of Henry Lacy, the founder, sculptured over it. A noble building, of slighter mould, and later date, with ten or twelve fine arched windows on each side, is said to have been intended for a church in the days of Elizabeth, but never finished.

Letter 16

Chester, October 7th, 1797

My dear Brother,

At three miles beyond Denbigh we passed through the village of Llanrhaiader, where a flaming King’s Head, a very uncommon object in Wales, was placed against the wall of a house. As I rode along I read the following lines, which I had no difficulty in remembering.

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Within this place there is a vault

Where such good liquor’s fix’d

You’ll say that water, hops and malt

Were never better mix’d.

~~These lines recalled to mind several other invitations to ale-houses, which I have met with in other parts of England; for, if I see two lines hang over my head, I always read them as I [run?], though I believe none will dispute the laurel with the Welsh poet. You would think me very vulgar if I were to repeat such compositions, perhaps? Never mind, you shall have them. The first is a sprightly widow in Yorkshire who cries:~~

~~Look up, Gentlemen, what do you think?~~

~~The Widow Waddington sells you drink!~~

The two next are found upon their respective signs.The first is the sign of the shoemaker’s last, and the motto:

All the long day I have sought for good ale

And at the last I’ve found it.

The other is the sign of the Moon, and underneath is written

Come in, my friends, and take a sup

And go home while the moon is up.

The last I shall give you is in the style of my Welsh friend in Llanrhaiader:

Halliday’s ale is stout and fine

Much care and pains he takes to brew it

If to taste it you incline

Turn down this lane, you’ll soon come to it.

Pardon me for detaining you [xxx]at [an] ale-house door. We will now get on to Ruthin.

Ruthin is the last town in the Vale of Clwyd, and the most flourish

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ing. It consists of three streets running up a hill, two along its top, and one down on the other side. They all meet in the centre, where an ancient, clumsy market house obstructs the way. But time has given it a kind of prescriptive right, which I should feel some scruples to invade. The left [xx] street at the top of the hill leads to the church. [xxxxxx]. The right [xx] street leads to the castle, of which little now remains but broken detached pieces of thick wall. When Owen Glyndwr lived in Glyndwrdy or the Vale of Dee, here lived Lord Grey of Ruthin, and though ten miles distant, and separated by a natural barrier of mountains, the two chiefs were too powerful to be friends.

The mountains which inclose the Vale of Clwyd are respectable, though not sublime. Over the eastern range, and towards the head of the vale, we now had to climb, on our way to Mold and in all my mountain hunting, such an escalade never fell to my lot. The ascent is two miles and very steep; it is cultivated high up, and there is even a gentleman’s house and park in a place where no wheel once set a-going could be stopped. Yet this is the road on which coal is carried to Ruthin, and on it we met two loaded carts. The manner of conducting them is ingenious, but, to me, not very satisfactory; and they approached so near to ungovernable, that I was glad when they had passed. They were small and not heavily laden, drawn by one horse, in the shafts, led by a boy, and stopped by two horses, behind, pulled back by a man; and with all their holding back, crossing the road, and dexterity of steerage, I expected every moment that the carts and horses would escape from their pilots, and overwhelm men, horses, and everything else they found in their way.

I rode up till I was not without some fears of sliding down over my horse's tail; I then walked. The road now overhung a chasm or bwlch, called Bwlch Pen Barras; and, with much toil, I reached the top. On the right rose

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the summit of the mountain, Pen Barras, from which the pass takes its name, and on the left, beyond the gulph, that of the still higher mountain, Moel Famma.

From the top of Bwlch Pen Barras, the sun shining in our faces, and the haziness of an October sky, prevented our seeing the whole of the Vale of Clwyd, and, over the tops of its western hills, the towering mountains of Snowdonia. We knew that such things were, but they were not for us. Our climate altered, as we travelled upwards. In the Vale, ~~it~~ ^ the air was calm and warm, but, before we gained the top of the pass, ~~the air~~ it was piercing, and the wind was high. When I hear the beating rain and roaring blast in my [~~xxx~~] chamber at home, I shall congratulate myself that I am not at top of Bwlch Pen Barras. Indeed, I can conceive of nothing on land so dreadful, in a storm, as these Welsh bwlchs in the mountains.

On the other side, the descent was trifling, but we had not only another climate; we had another world. We exchanged, in a moment, the rich landscapes of the Vale of Clwyd for mountains covered with heath no longer purple, and fern already brown.

The cottages and their inhabitants partook of the poverty of the soil. We pursued our way, still environed by mountains, which now were rocky; one before us singularly so; rows of stone, one above another, encircling it round like walls. All was wild and dreary, and we could not guess, round, or over, which mountains our road must lie; when at a sudden turn, our man exclaimed, 'There's England!' I turned ^ my head and, between an opening of two mountains saw, ^ at a distance, and far below me, a level country, with inclosed fields. Though glad of such a prospect for my lodging, I looked with regret on the country I was leaving, perhaps for ever. One small scene of enchantment only remained; the village of Llanverras, with a river, a bridge, and a mill, surrounded by mountains and hanging woods.

If I had one spark of poetry within me, I would here address a pathetic far^e^well ode to the mountains, rocks, and glens of Wales. In vain! I can feel; but I cannot write verse! My plodding, groveling genius can

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not even reach the sublime heights of prose, for which some ladies are so much admired.

Rugged hills brought us to a stone that divides the parishes of Llanverras and Mold, and the counties of Denbigh, and Flint, and a long descent brought us to the town of Mold, situated ^ on a small hill in the flat country we had seen from the moun^tains^, and, like Denbigh and St Asaph, fetching all its water from the plain below. Mold is a neat little town, less Welsh than English. Here has been a castle; the mount on which it stood is all that remains; and we were not allowed to visit it.

Both the ancient and modern limits of England and Wales appear to me altogether arbitrary; they were probably fixed by the sword. The ancient dyke is about a mile and a half beyond Mold; the stone that now marks the boundaries of the counties of Flint and Chester, and consequently the kingdom of England and the principality of Wales, is about a mile and a half before we reach Chester, ~~that is, nine miles further~~ but the natural barrier is Mold Mountain. The last of our journey, and that we descended to Mold.

The twelve miles between Mold and Chester is over a flat, uninteresting country and a bad road one part of which is so notorious it is called the Dirty mile.[27] The only objects worth notice were Hawarden castle, and the estuary of the Dee, with a multitude of vessels at anchor. The last mile and half of road, which was our entrance into England, was the worst that ever England offered to my view: it was spacious enough, but of soft sandy rock, that the coal carts had worn into holes sufficiently large to bury themselves in. We were frequently surrounded by a dozen, and sometimes by twenty of these carts; with each driver leading and pushing his draft horse, and exerting all his skill in cartmanship to avoid the holes. Had a wheel gotten into one of them, neither praying to

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Hercules, as the carter did of old, or putting his shoulder to the wheel, as Hercules recommended, could have relieved him.[28] His cart must have been dashed to pieces, in spite of men or gods.

We crossed the Dee into Chester, which instead of the solemn, decayed city I expected to find it, looks busy, populous, and flourishing. Though as it is the eve of the fair, it may probably be raised something above its natural pitch.

Letter 17

Nantwich, Oct 9, 1797

My Dear Brother,

Do not be alarmed at seeing Nantwich at the top of a letter, when only letters from North Wales were promised you; or fancy that, like certain shy singers who cannot be stopped when they are once set a-going, I may continue writing across the island of Great Britain. I give it under my hand and seal, that you shall be fairly quit of me at this place.

The wall that surrounds Chester is intire, and is one mile, three quarters, a hundred and one yards in circumference. Its top is a public walk, from four to six feet in width, paved with flat stones, and secured by a parapet, on each side, about four feet high. Where it crosses the principal outlets of the city, it runs over gateways, and the parapet walls have given way to iron rails. The views from hence down into the busy streets are singular. In some parts of the wall the prospect is excluded by buildings, which rise on either side the path; but where it is open to the river and the Welsh hills, it is delightful. The castle stands on a steep red rock, without the walls. It has a new appearance, though in the old style; and exhibits a pair of little cannon, to terrify whom they may concern. A row of paltry brick houses have had the assurance to place themselves; and a pompous prison is rearing its head hard by.

On each side the principal streets of Chester are two rows of shops, one above the other. Those level with the street project from the houses and their

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flat roofs form a gallery which is the street to the shops above. It is a constant thoroughfare and communicates with the street below by flights of steps and the shopkeepers display their wares on its walls and balustrades. But ~~the shops must be dark and~~ I cannot conceive of the reason for placing the~~m~~ shops on one another's shoulders when God Almighty there is has given room enough for them all to stand on the ground – at least, if the security derived from the city walls was a reason it exists no longer.

The most impressive object in Chester is the Cathedral which is massive and grand. It was originally built in the year 660, but as it now appears it is too wonderful a monument of wealth and taste for that early age. I did not go in at the principal entrance but at a smaller one, and found myself in a complete church, dirty, dark and shabby, with a carpet on the communion table that looked as if it had been several years trodden under foot at an inn. I exclaimed, what a cathedral! But observing a partition with a fastened door, I went out in search of another entrance and found that the precept in holy writ which enjoins us to enter in at the strait gate does not apply to Chester cathedral. I now entered in at the wide gate, and saw a noble church, divided into three aisles, by two rows of pillars. The ornaments of the choir are extremely fine, but the Bishop's throne, a curious kind of stone pulpit, adorned with arches, pinnacles, and small gilt statues of kings and queens of Mercia, particularly attracted my notice.

I stayed the service in the cathedral. Living, as I do, in a retired place ~~xxxx~~ in the country, the paraphernalia of religion was new to me, and impressed my mind with awe. The grandeur of the place, and above all the solemn sweetness of the voices, raised to celebrate the praise of Almighty God, elevated my soul to him, and my emotions bordered on tears. But when I saw the Dean, cloathed in scarlet

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and fine linen, and preceeded by a silver mace, stalk along the cloisters, enter a door, and become invisible to a bowing and admiring crowd, the charm dissolved, and I perceived, with some indignation, that the creator was lost in the creature.

The annual fair at Chester lasts three weeks; but the principal business is transacted in one. As it is the great mart to which the Irish bring their linens, so it is their opportunity to supply themselves with the cottons of Lancashire, the woolens of Yorkshire, and the hardwares of Birmingham and Sheffield. I was told that Irish linens are sold at one fair to the amount of half a million sterling; and that a hundred thousand pounds worth have been sold in one day. During the fair, a glove is hung out at an ancient building called the Pentise, to invite all strangers to bring their goods; and the concourse of people is so great, that most of the private houses let lodgings.

The day the Mayor of Chester goes out of office is a day of anarchy. His authority is understood to cease in the morning; a bull is baited, all sorts of petty excesses are committed; and the greatest blackguard is master. At night the authority of the new mayor is acknowledged and all things are restored to order.

Chester is forty miles from Liverpool by land, as the first bridge over the Mersey is at Warrington. By water is a voyage of only three hours, with a favourable wind. A covered boat, with a cabin, sets out every day, and conveys passengers by a canal cut between the Dee and the Mersey, and a packet waits to carry them on to Liverpool by sea.

The whole country from Chester to Nantwich, a distance of nineteen miles, is a continued plain; but a considerable range of hills from a back ground to the left. For the first five miles, to the village of Tarvin, the country is poor, and road a wretched pavement. Beyond through

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the villages of Duddon and Clotton, I was gratified with the sight of fine pastures, variegated with wood, and large and neat balck and white farm houses [~~xxxxx~~]. Every thing wore the aspect of abundance. About three miles, on our right, stood Beeston Castle, on the summit of a tall insulated rock, rising abruptly out of the plain, and said to be 365 feet in height. A number, perhaps, too singular to be exactly true.

In answer to my enquiries concerning the dairies of Cheshire, I was informed they are generally from thirty to sixty cows, and there are a few of fourscore. A dairy of fifty cows will make two cheeses a day, of fifty or sixty pounds weight each. Farms are let from thirty shillings to three pounds an acre, and the candidates for them are so numerous, that they are commonly let by auction.

At ten miles from Chester we came to Tarporley, a small Market Town. I saw on a tomb, in the church, two ladies of the Crewe family, in the dress of the time of King William, whose towers[29] the statuary had plaited as neatly, in beautiful white marble, as it was possible for their own tire-women to have done, in fine lace.[30]

Nantwich is a large town, and contains a greater number of fine old half-timbered houses, of about the days of Elizabeth, than I have remarked in any one place. The church, both within and without, is in the cathedral style; and much it grieved me to see a part of it going to decay. The houses surround the churchyard, without any fence to make them keep at a proper distance, and the consequence has been that on one side they ^ have encroached on the view of this noble edifice; and on the other there is only a very narrow passage between.

In the body of the church in Nantwich is a curious antique stone pulpit not now made use of; and two old carved pews, mounted up aloft. In one of the transepts is a coffin, without a lid, hollowed out of a solid block of wood, into the form of the body which has been placed in it. It

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was found under the chancel, when the pavement was taken up to repair a drain. In the other transept is an unheeded, mutilated figure of a knight, perhaps a hero of the crusades;[31] a proof, if any proof were wanting, that men must die, and their productions must follow. The choir is very beautiful; its stalls are ornamented with carving.[32] The roof exhibits, among its gothic ribs, a number of small tablets of stone, on which is sculptured the history of our Saviour; the floor is paved with little square bricks, that appear to have been painted. But Peter and Paul block up the window, and keep out the light; an office those worthy apostles were certainly never designed for.

The people of Nantwich take more care of their churchyard than of their church. While the beautiful roof, and carved ornaments of the one are mouldering away, every grave that is made in the other is instantly levelled, so that it has no appearance of a cemetery.

## Editorial Notes

[1] From this point onwards, the published ‘Letters’ labelled 10-18 which appeared intermittently in the *Monthly Magazine* from July 1816 to August 1819, offer a condensed, amalgamated and frequently depersonalized version of Hutton’s travels in 1797, 1799 and 1800 as she described them in Letters 10-29, given in full here. While I have occasionally drawn attention to one or two significant alterations in the footnotes, I have not pursued a detailed comparison of the two texts; more information about the differences between the 29 letters in NLW MS 1907C and the 18 letters published in the *Monthly Magazine* can be found in the Introduction above.

[2] This appears (perhaps unsurprisingly) in the published version as: ‘except for one dirty creature, who seemed to be the refuse of another country.’

[3] For the Inn at Cernioge see Kirsty McHugh and Michael Freeman.

[4] This description of the effects of the weather and the soaking petticoats – valuable information for the historian and full of touches of Hutton's self-deprecating humour - is typical of the material omitted from the printed version.

[5] An extensive series of cascades, pools and fountains were developed in Chatsworth gardens from the seventeenth century.

[6] Note written in Catherine Hutton's hand.

[7] Inserted on a separate slip of paper.

[8] Possibly a Mrs Read, widow of the previous landlord, who had married Samuel Read in 1778.

[9] The *Monthly Magazine* (Letter X, Volume 41, p. 504) relocates the section on mail-coaches from MS Letter 15 (below), and inserts it here.

[10] This is another Bull's Head.

[11] Josiah Wedgwood had perfected a type of 'black basalt ware' by the late 1760s; in 1790 he produced a copy of the (Roman) Portland Vase in black jasperware. See here.

[12] An additional line from the *Monthly Magazine* has no equivalent anywhere in the manuscript, and is uncharacteristic of Hutton, who goes out of her way to paint the Welsh in a positive light. 'It is said, that the features were perfect till very lately; when on the circumstance being noticed by an Englishman, one of the Welsh, in hatred to the memory of their conqueror, took the pains to climb up and deface them'. (July, 1816) 504-05.

[13] For the Vaynol monument, see here.

[14] Written above this phrase in a later hand 'See p.98'. The printing press in Caernarfon was very recent – set up in a room off the High Street in 1796 by Thomas Roberts, who had learned his craft in the religious community at Trefecca, near Talgarth in Breconshire. Hutton is right to suggest that the bulk of printing presses were based in south and mid-Wales, although Holywell and Mold had also seen new arrivals in 1796. See Ifano Jones, *Printing and Printers in Wales and Monmouthshire* (William Lewis: Cardiff, 1925) 146-48.

[15] A chapel to St Helen (Capel Elen) was situated on the banks of the Seiont; the saint/princess is associated in medieval Welsh texts with the building of a Roman road (Sarn Elen).

[16] Cf Peter Bayley Williams, 'After travelling about a mile and a half from Carnarvon, we obtain a view of the River Seiont, and having proceeded along its banks a short way, we cross it, over a handsome Arch, built in 1769, by one Henry Parry, as appears by a stone in the Battlement, and where he is undeservedly denominated the modern Inigo', *The Tourist's Guide* (1821) p. 107.

[17] Thomas Lloyd of Shrewsbury; his daughter, Frances Williams (b. 1798) was an Anglesey artist, a co-founder of the Anglesey Lifeboat Association and the grandmother of the C20th Welsh artist Kyffin Williams.

[18] A widespread text originally deriving from India, which included the story of the faithful greyhound. There were several C18th editions which Hutton could have read, including *The Famous history of the seven wise masters of Rome* (Printed and sold in Aldermar Church Yard, Bow-Lane, London [?1750]). It is also known as 'The Seven Sages of Rome'.

[19] 'Half way down/ Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade'. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, IV:vi. Bracken was used as animal bedding, and the ash in soap-making.

[20] Gwinnah appears as a character in Hutton's novel, *The Welsh Mountaineer* (1817).

[21] David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri, 1759-1822). In 1796 he had obtained the post of 'Coal-Meter' (measuring coal) at Amlwch copper mines on Anglesey; Hutton's reference to him as Dafydd Du 'of Amlwch' is thus highly topical, since he did not remain in this role for long.

[22] Seven lines are scored through here, and are illegible.

[23] Helen mother of the Emperor Constantine, (246/248-c. 330) is frequently conflated with 'Elen Luydawc' ('Elen of the Hosts'), who appears in the Welsh medieval legend 'Macsen Wledig' as a princess of Segontium (Caernarfon), wife of Magnus Maximus (fourth century ruler of Britain).

[24] Cf Thomas Pennant, ‘In my memory the traveller went along a narrow path cut on its front, like the road on Penmaen Mawr, but infinitely more terrible and dangerous; a fine coach-road has of late been formed far behind this precipice.’ *Tour in Wales* (1784) II, 334.

[25] ‘Du’ is black; ‘glas’ is blue. Dulas appears relatively frequently in Welsh place-names, and can also mean dark blue or blackish blue.

[26] Reading uncertain.

[27] A section of the A549 between Lane End and Dobs Hill is still called ‘Dirty Mile’.

[28] Hercules and the Waggoner is a fable recorded towards the end of the first century AD, and later credited to Aesop. When the driver’s cart gets stuck, usually in mud, he calls on the god to help him. Hercules tells him to put his own shoulder to the wheel before asking for help, and the man frees the cart by himself.

[29] OED sv ‘Tower’ (n.6.b) ‘A very high head-dress worn by women in the reigns of William III and Anne. It was built up in the form of a tower of pasteboard, muslin, lace, and ribbons’.

[30] These are Jane Done (d. 1662) and Mary Crewe (d. 1690), and her granddaughter Mary Knightley who died as a child in 1674. The monument comprises three figures in white marble on a black base, the women recumbent and the child with flowers standing.

[31] This may be the alabaster effigy of Sir David Craddock, (d. ca 1384), in the south transept.

[32] The church contains some 20 intricately carved misericords of the early C15$^{th}$.

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## Authorial Notes

[1] [see page 45]

[2] + He was afterwards drowned in crossing his own river