Richard Bull to Thomas Pennant

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From:	Richard Bull
To:	Thomas Pennant
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Dear Sir

West Cowes, Isle of Wight.
June 18. 1789

My troubling you again, before I left town would have answer'd no purpose, because I could not come at the information you wanted, and I wish'd to give you, respecting the new River company, nor am I yet able to do it, in any degree effectually.[1] Alderman Skinner, the Auctioneer, who is perfectly au fait to the subject, was the person I wish'd to have receiv'd my informations from, but I could not see him, in truth I fear, he is a little angry with me, for having employ'd Greenwood of late, altho the Alderman has sold many thousand pounds of M^{r}. Morices effects, on our account, but Gratitude only looks forwards; Shame on her, She has no retrospect. All I have learn'd is, that there are 72 Shares, now worth 10,000£ each, tho the original value was only 100£. the company divides according to the profits, and are very secret, in their management. –

I had formerly the print of Sir W. Dixie, but I never knew it was from the painting in Christ church Hospital, or that there was any picture of him in London. Lord Mounstuart has now got it, whose disposition is too liberal to refuse you a copy of it, and I will get it done for you for a Guinea, at least I believe I can, because one of Streets journeymen[2] has lately done t[illegible]wo for me, at that price, from the drawings you had the goodness to indulge ^me with, the liberty of having copied, I mean Sir Henry Lea, and Sir - Clough.[3] They are not so well executed, as your drawings, in Basire's hands, except as to colouring. I am at this place for the purpose of bathing my Knee in warm sea water, and am wi[illegible]lling to believe I am mending, but at present, moves, and thats all. 'tis an unlucky ailment for me, for walking was almost my o[illegible]nly amusement without doors, and at my age, and with my infirmities I have no loose pleasures to spare. time was when I had a little odd kind of a sociable conviviality about me, but the sparks, if I had any, are all extinguish'd, and I am become an old Volcano burnt out, and have nothing better to do, than
"Walk sober off, before a Spritlier age
"comes tittering on, and Shoves me from the Stage.[4]

I am realy asham'd to make you pay the postage of a letter like this, but I had rather risk giving offence, than that you should blame me for giving no kind of answer to a Business you seem'd anxious about. I am here without my family, and can tell you nothing from a place, where I have not one friend except the Stone eater,[5] who I shall invite to dinner to morrow, and what ever he asks for, I suppose I may give him a Stone without offending him.

I desire my best remembrances to you, and your House, and am, as always, Dear Sir
Sincerely yours.

Rich^{d}: Bull

P.S. I believe there is a good account of the new River company, in *London, and the Environs discrib'd, 8vo. 1761*. but my recollection often deceives me, let it not also deceive you. –

Stamp: (postmark) JU 1[illegible] 89

Thomas Pennant Esqr. | Downing | Flintshire

Editorial Notes

[1] On Pennant's interest in the 'new river' and New River Company see 1083 and 1086.

[2] '[O]ne of Streets journeymen' may be a reference to a qualified artisan printer working on one of the streets central to the printing trade in London, among them Fleet Street in the City of London.

[3] For Pennant's mention of drawings of Lee and Clough see 1071.

[4] Alexander Pope, 'Imitations of Horace, Epistle II', lines 324–5.

[5] *OED* defines 'stone-eater' as 'a conjuror who pretends to swallow stones', with an 1820 example. It is used here as a nickname for an acquaintance of Bull's.