# Daniel Lysons to Thomas Pennant, 13 November 1767

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| **From:** | Daniel Lysons |
| **To:** | Thomas Pennant |
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Glocester Nov: 13 1767

Dear Sir

Yours I rec$^{d}$. in oxford where I was attending our College Election, & return'd home on friday last. If you desire me to go on from N$^{o}$. 6 you must tell me what fish N$^{o}$. 6 are as I made no rough draught of what I wrote, but I think they must be Salmon, shad twaite Lamprey, Lamperns, Elvers. Pray did I say nothing about Sturgeon?

We have certainly two species of Eels in the Severn. One, which I take to be the Conger, has a remarkably broad head, & mouth, and its body is thicker in proportion to its length than the common Eel. It is also different in colour, its back being of a yellowish green, & its belly very white, whence it is here calld a silver Eel.[1] The common Eel has a pointed snout, a narrow head, a black back, and a white, or dirty yellow colourd billy. If the silver Eel is put into a fresh water pond it will live, & grow to about 2 or 3 pounds weight, but not larger, and I never saw any of them larger that were taken in the fresh water of the Severn. But in the salt water I have frequently seen the Conger Eel (which agrees with the silver Eel in shape) of many pounds weight I have seen them more than 12, & I am told it is no uncommon thing to have them 40, 50, or 60. If you will come to me next Summer we will enquire more particularly into this Species of fish.

The Lampreys certainly return to the Sea. And it is as certain that the City of Glocester sends annually a present of Lampreys to the King. They are sent in a large raised pye at Christmass. If possible the Corporation sends fresh fish, & for that purpose always give a guinea a piece for them.[2] But it is so very rare a thing to get fresh fish at that time of the year that they ~~commonly~~ ^are frequently oblig'd to send some ^of last years that has been preserved. I will make enquiry whence this custom took its rise and let you know.

D$^{r}$. Charleton, at whose request I wrote to you about the ascent of minerals into the veins of plants, is of your opinion that minerals cannot enter the [...] juices of plants in such a manner as to impregnate their fruit with their respective qualities. But he does ~~not~~ think that the acidum vagum fossile may, & that the colics, & palsies attending the Devonshire colic may proceed from this cause.[3] He asserts (what I much doubt) that the Drinkers of Cyder made in Herefordshie & Worcestershire have no such colics, or palsies as the rest of the Cyder counties are subject to. And he supposes that where ever minerals abound there the acidum vag abounds also, & thus he accounts for the 2 counties above mention'd being free from this colic, but not the others where minerals & consequently the acidum vagum fossile abound. I have no doubt but that the different qualities of the juices of plants depend cheefly upon the soil they grow in. But how far the acid. vag. fossil may in this manner contribute to the colics & palsies or what you think of its allways attending minerals he desires me to ask your opinion. There is an answer to D$^{r}$. Baker published by M$^{r}$. Geach Surgeon at exeter in which he seems justly to attribute the Colic to Cyder made from unripe fruit, or not properly fermented. And with as much appearance of reason supposes that the lead found in 18 bottles of Devonshire cyder proceeded from shot left in the bottles, as D$^{r}$ Baker does that it proceeded from the lead with which the cramps of the cyder mill ~~was~~ ^were fastened.[4]

I am obliged to you for your enquiry after my health, & have the pleasure to acquaint you that I rec$^{d}$. as much benefit from the Bath waters as I could expect or hope for, & the ride to oxford after, by which I was absent six weeks in the whole, has so far established my health that I find my self in better health and spirits than I have known for a long time. I hope therefore that you will make me a visit next summer, and we will then make our enquiries into the natural productions of this part of the world together. I wish you all health and happiness and am

Yours sincerely

D. Lysons.

P.S. My Sister Reeves husband being lately dead I shall probably be obliged to go to London sometime in the Spring, pray when shall you be there.

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*Stamp: (handstamp)* GLOUCESTER

To Thomas Pennant Esq$^{r}$ at Downing near Holywell Flintshire

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## Editorial Notes

[1] See *British zoology* (2nd edn., 1768–70), III, pp. 115–18, on the 'Conger' variety of eel, for information about which Pennant acknowledges his debt to Doctor Borlase. The large numbers of conger fry which come up the river Severn in April are noted on p. 116.

[2] The Gloucester custom of presenting the king with a 'lamprey pye, covered with a large raised crust' in spite of the difficulty of acquiring the fish at that time of year is mentioned in *British zoology* (2nd edn., 1768–70), III, p. 59. Pennant also mentions the prevalence of the lamprey in the Severn and the discovery of a large, 3lb lamprey in the Esk. See ibid., p. 58.

[3] Rice Charleton discusses cases of cholic related to the consumption of cyder in *Three tracts on Bath water* (Bath: R. Cruttwell for W. Taylor, 1774), pp. 72–80, and the work of George Baker on the Devonshire cholic in ibid., pp. 78–9. See further n. 4, below.

[4] On the dispute between George Baker and Francis Geach regarding the causes of colic, see letter from Devo at Exeter to Mr Urban, April 14 [1798], *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 183 (April 1798), 305: 'Dr. Baker ascribed the colic to the leaden pounds in which the cider ... is pressed; Mr. Geach to the shot left in the bottles'.