#### **EARLY TOURISTS IN WALES**

# 18TH & 19TH CENTURY TOURISTS' COMMENTS ABOUT WALES

#### Michael Freeman

This paper describes the website created by Michael Freeman <a href="https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/">https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/</a> which contains classified extracts from over 1,200 published and manuscript accounts of tours of Wales, 1700-1900. Michael Freeman was curator of Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth, 1991-2012.

The site was originally designed to create very detailed evidence for the article 'Perceptions of Welshness: tourists' impressions of the material and traditional culture of Wales, 1750 – 1850' published in 'Folk Life' Vol. 53, No. 1, (May 2015), pp. 57–71 but the site will in time contain much more than that article covers.

The site will include many fully referenced quotations on over 200 different subjects about which the tourists wrote and illustrated.

Some of the data on the site was first uploaded in May, 2015. It is anticipated that it will take 12 months to upload the bulk of the relevant material. Pages on a variety of subjects have been uploaded initially to illustrate the range of material available.

The site will be constantly under review. Any comments, corrections, additions or questions, will be very welcome.

This paper reproduces the current section on mills.

Mills were found all over Wales. Most were powered by fastflowing streams, but some had water diverted to them via leats from slower rivers. Some windmills were constructed but few were long-lasting. A few mills were driven by steam by the end of the 19th century.

Types of mills mentioned by tourists:

- corn mill for grinding corn and sorting the products
- furze mill for crushing furze (plants) for animal feed
- woollen mills where machines were driven to spin, card and weave wool, and to process the cloth to make flannel (pandy / flannel mill)
- cotton mill for processing cotton into cloth
- rolling mill for rolling out sheet iron
- stamping mill / stamp mill for crushing ore
- flint mill for crushing flint for use in the ceramics industry
- oil and paint mill for crushing materials to produce paint

Water power was used extensively at some industrial sites, especially for pumping water and driving machinery.

Tourists were impressed by the industrial uses to which water was put to drive mills, but a few were more attracted to the romantic settings of small, tumble-down mills in remote places.

There are relatively few references by tourists to mills, probably because:

- the tourists kept to the main roads along which there were few mills
- they were not particularly interested in things with which they were familiar in England

However, there are many drawings and paintings of mills in Wales.

References to mills by tourists. This includes references to place name elements felin / melin (mill) and pandy (a mill where woollen cloth was processed to make flannel) which are frequently used in place names in Wales. Most of the references to Pandy are to Rhaeadr y Pandy, Penmachno, because it was near a waterfall (see separate list at the end).

The remainder of this paper gives the references and quotes from tourists, with the relevant dates.

## 3 May 1662 Talybont, Cardiganshire

'To the silver mills, and viewed the mint at Talybont, and took as exact a description as we could of the silver works.' [but the on-line transcription contains no more detail]

Ray, John, (1627-1705), Memorials of John Ray: consisting of his life by Dr Derham. Biographical and critical notices by Sir J.E. Smith and Cuvier and Du Petit-Thouars. By Edwin Lankester, Ray Society, 1846, p. 172, ITINERARY 3, May 1662

# 1746 Llanihangle [Llanfihangel rhyd Ithon]

Fulling mill, at work on flannels, this and the racks were the most material things in the village.

Anon [A Countryman], A Journey to Llandrindod Wells (1746, 2nd edition), p. 23

## 1755 Mills in the parish of Llanbadarn Fawr

Four corn mills on the Rheidol, six corn mills on the other rivers, 2 fulling mills, some stamping mills for lead ore.

Survey of the parish of Llanbadarn Fawr, 1755

(BM Addn Mss, 14927, ff 22v-23r, Answers to the Queries of ye Society of Antiquaries of London, by L.M., of the Parish of Llanbadarn Fawr in the County of Cardigan, South Wales. Part ii Natural History, section 9.

Lewis, F.R., Lewis Morris and the Parish of Llanbadarn Fawr, Cardiganshire, in 1755, Arch Camb, 93 (1938), pp. 15-30

# 1768 letter from 'Maespandy'

Jackson, J., 1768 and 1770, Letters from and relating to North Wales .... Cardiff Central Library, MS 4.1163, published in Journal of the Merionethshire Historical and Record Society, III, pp. 360-373; IV, (1962) 146-159; V, 208-220, date: 25.9.1768, letter no. 3, archivist's letter no. III, pp. 21-38

## *30 September 1769*

To Ffestiniog, 'from whence, with the assistance of three ponies and a guide, we amused ourselves by visiting three cataracts [Ceunant Cwn, Pistyll-ddu and Ceunant-y-felin]

Grimston, James Bucknall, Sir, (Third Viscount Grimston, 1749-1809), A Tour in Wales, 1769, Hertfordshire Record Office D/EV/F15-19); Report on the manuscripts of the Earl of Gorhambury, Historic Monuments Commission Report, (HMSO, 1906), pp. 242-283

## 25 June 1776

Road from Monmouth to Chepstow, through Tintern and between hills covered with woods; no travelling for a chaise, Tintern, dined at the Beaufort Arms and ale house. Abbey (with references), Iron works, vitrified dross of the iron pounded by a mill for that purpose and sent to Bristol as an ingredient for making glass. Note: Six weeks Tour, 164 [Arthur Young]

Mytton, Thomas, "Journal of a tour thro' part of South Wales, 1776", by Thomas Mytton and his sons, Henry and Thomas. Shropshire Record Office, 1037/27/41, p. 4



PLATE 1 Iron Mills: A View Near Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire.

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# 1777 Dolgellau

We entered among the miserable hovels of this town, under a boarded channel, which serves as an aqueduct to a mill, and from which the water is constantly dripping upon the passenger's head.

Wyndham, Henry Penruddocke. A gentleman's tour through Monmouthshire and Wales, in the months of June and July, 1774 and in the months of June, July and August, 1777, (Second edition, E Easton, Salisbury, 1781)



PLATE 2 Mill near Dolgelle Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

#### 1780s, 1790s

If you inn at Tanybwlch walk up to Miss Gruffydd's house and ask them to carry you to Llyn yr Rhaeadr Du. Go to Ffestiniog and direct Mr Owen the landlord to take you along the banks of the Cynfal ... and visit Pengwern mill.

Notes by Mr Lloyd of Havodunos, written for the guidance of Mr Greville on a tour through North Wales. There are many references to mines.

NLW Hamilton and Greville 102 (1 foolscap page), 1780s or 1790s



PLATE 3 Pengwern Mill near Ffestiniog Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

#### 1781 Diserth

A water-fall in the deep and rounded hollow of a rock, finely darkened with ivy, once gave additional beauty to this spot; but of late the diverting of waters to a mill has robbed the place of this elegant variation.

Pennant, Thomas, The Journey to Snowdon, (1781), p. 6; (1883 edition) p. 112

## 1794 Montgomeryshire

A new mill is erecting near Machynlleth for carding and spinning wool, and in some of the towns are spinning jennies that spin 24 threads at a time, but the wool is generally spun on common wheels.

Kay, G., (from Leith), General View of the Agriculture of North Wales, Edinburgh (1794), p. 22



PLATE 4 Mills at Machyntleth
Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

## 1795, near Tintern

On returning late to the Inn, I informed my companions, that there was at no great distance a large iron foundry, never seen to perfection but at night, and proposed our visiting it. Mr. Coleridge felt downright horror at the thought of being again moved; considering that he had had quite enough exercise for one day, and infinitely preferring the fire of his host to the forge of the Cyclops. The ladies also rather shrunk from encountering a second night expedition; but Mr. Southey cordially approved the suggestion, and we ushered forth, in the dreariness of midnight, to behold this real spectacle of sublimity! Our ardour indeed, was a little cooled when, by the glimmering of the stars, we perceived a dark expanse stretched by our path,—an ugly mill-pond, by the side of which we groped, preserving, as well as we could, a respectful distance, and entering into a mutual compact that if (after all) one should fall in, the other should do all that hi him lay to pull him out.

Cottle, Joseph, (Ed.), Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey, (1847), p. 27 and following

#### 1796

The adjoining county of Shropshire partakes with Wales in this capital manufacture, and being more wealthy, has in general substituted machinery to manual labour;

several individuals in Shrewsbury and its neighbourhood, employ themselves successfully in this business; but by far the greatest undertaking of the kind is a factory about four or five miles from Shrewsbury, at a place called the Isle, belonging to Messrs. Cooke and Mason, and erected three years ago. The mill is situated on the neck of a horse-shoe-like winding of the Severn, whose diameter is about three hundred yards, whereas the river makes a serpentine course of nearly three miles before it arrives, from the upper part of the isthmus, at the lower: a tunnel five feet in diameter is worked through the neck, opening into the bed of the upper part of the river, and a great water wheel is placed at the other extremity: this wheel communicates motion to a vast series of machinery for spinning, fulling, and many other operations. The power that works the wheel is immense; being a solid cylinder of water, five feet in diameter, with a fall more than seventeen times greater than that of the Severn, which is itself a rapid river. Various were the apparent difficulties, and numerous the unforeseen accidents, which combined to baffle the design, arising from floods, and a bed of loose land lying in the direction of the tunnel; all these, however, have been at length overcome by the perseverance and great mechanical skill of Mr. Mason; and the success of the undertaking bids fair to be as complete, as in its execution it was arduous.

Aikin, Arthur, (1773-1854), Journal of a Tour through North Wales and a part of Shropshire with observations of Mineralogy and other branches of natural History [1796] (London, 1797, 8vo), CHAP. VII. On the woollen manufactures of North Wales (Communicated by a Friend), pp. 76-77

#### 1797

One small scene of enchantment remained, – the village of Llanverras, with a river, a bridge, and a mill, surrounded by mountains and hanging woods; and a long descent brought us to the town of Mold.

Letters written during a Second Tour in North Wales; by Miss Hutton, Letter XII, Chester; Oct 7, 1797, The Monthly Magazine, or British Register, Vol. 42, (November, 1816), pt. 2, pp. 323-325

#### 1797 Barmouth

Woollen M [manufactory] In Merionethshire are 18 walking [sic] mills – dressing web cloth which is conveyed to Shrewsbury their only market. Where part of it is dressed and dyed – sent to London, Bristol etc to supply foreign markets as well as our own.

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1755Bi, Notebook 2, Journal of a tour through n. Wales in 1797 (iv), pp. 1-11

## 31 August 1797 Holywell

Holywell cotton mill pay £500 per annum for a fall upon the stream which they make no use of − in order to keep off other adventurers.

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1755Bi, Notebook 2, Journal of a tour through n. Wales in 1797 (iv), pp. 23-29

## 4 September 1797 near Mold

To the cotton mill near Mold, an elegant structure of 5 stories high built about 6 years ago by Atherton, Hodgson and Co in opposition to the Holywell company. Before the war about 400 hands were employed – now not above 250.

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1755Bi Notebook 3 [untitled] [v], pp. 29-36

# 15 August 1797 [Penrhyn]

Sawing mill to saw tomb stones

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1762Bi, Diaries, Journal part II, Exd Feb 1809, pp. 88-99

#### 1798-1801

About five miles from Llanrwst, leaving the road to Penmachno on the right, we passed over some fields, to see a small waterfall on the river Conwy. Its height is not very considerable, being only twelve or fourteen yards. Somewhat more than half a mile beyond this we stopped at a fulling mill, near a bridge called Pont y Pandy, the bridge of the fulling mill. Here is a cataract, called Rhaeadr y Craig Llwyd, truly romantic and picturesque.

Bingley, William, North Wales including its Scenery, Antiquities, Customs and Sketches of its Natural History, delineated from two excursions through all the interesting parts of that country during the summers of 1798 and 1801, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1804)

## 1799 Cwmystwyth Mines

These masses are again reduced to a smaller size, like similar means, and afterwards thoroughly sifted, washed, and cleansed from every impurity. The next step is its removal to the stamping mill where it is cast into a large wooden trough, and hounded into small particles, the size of a pin's head by, by heavy beams of timber, shod with massive iron weights. These beams are made of oak or some other ponderous wood, several feet in length; they are elevated and depressed by means of a water mill, and discharged with mighty force on the matter to be granulated.

Warner, Richard, Rev (1763-1857), A Second Walk through Wales ... (Bath, 1799), p. 67

#### 1799

On the right rose Mynedd Vawr (great mountain,) the twin brother of Moel Eilian, but with one of its sides broken into a tremendous precipice. The vale, between, consisted of a few starved meadows; at the end of which was a mill, and a broad and rapid, though not a high, fall of water. Here the road wound suddenly round to the left, and we found ourselves on the margins of Cwellin Pool

Letters written during a Second Tour in North Wales; by Miss Hutton, Letter XV, Bala; Sept 16, 1799, The Monthly Magazine, or British Register, Vol. 45, (1818), pt. 1, pp. 397-399

# Early 19th century? Cardiganshire?

Re shelling mills for clover 'whence came this information?'

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1759B (2 sets of vols), Agriculture in South Wales, f. 56 (p. 9)

# Early 19th Century?, near Haverfordwest

Arkright? Machinery at a mill at Prendergast parish near Haverfordwest – spinning cotton. Partners?? failed ... see Hassell

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW 1759 Bii, 2<sup>nd</sup> set of notebooks, f. 295

'There is a cotton mill near Haverfordwest which employs about 150 persons and this is the principal manufacture of the county.' referring to Malkin, II, 298

[note] It has stopped a few years ago, WD, 1813

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW 1759 Bii, 2<sup>nd</sup> set of notebooks, f. 407

## 1800 (about), Dolgellau

Two fulling mills – one for the fine and the other for the coarse flannels.

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), NLW MS 1755Bi, Notebook 6, Journal (viii), pp. 40-43 [date uncertain, around 1800]



PLATE 5 Near Dolgelly Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales



PLATE 6 The Water Mill near Dolgelly, North Wales Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

#### 1801

{Thomas Martyn arrived near an iron forge and slitting mill which are} 'encompassed by coal and cinders'. p. 41

Tintern Ferry, where they see a corn mill and are escorted around the abbey p. 54



PLATE 7 Water Mill near Tintern Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

We passed through the river Stalker which descended from a mountain on our left, and then pursued its course over the rough stones till it reached the valley on our right watering some beautiful meadows by its meandering and placid stream till it reached the village Llangurig where it turned a mill. **p. 146** 

{They pass York Mill and a number of lime kilns before arriving at Powis Castle which Thomas Martyn describes}. **p. 152** 

Martyn, T., A Tour of South Wales, [1801], NLW MS 1340C, [all page images on National Library of Wales web site]

# 1803 Glamorgan / Gower

Furze and furze mill [extensive discussion]

Evans, John, B.A., 1768-1812 (Jesus College, Oxford), Letters written during a tour through South Wales, in the year 1803, (London, 1804), p. 208

#### 1803

The morning that we left Llandeilo brought with it a scene of affliction to the surrounding country: one of those deluging rains which often do so much mischief in mountainous countries fell with unparalleled violence during the night; when the vast accession of water, unable to discharge itself by the ordinary channels, swept away trees, fences, small buildings, cattle, and poultry in its devious course. Several mills were destroyed; and many an industrious cottager, awakened by the flood eddying round his bed, saw himself at once dispossessed of the fruits of many year's hard savings.

Barber, J.T., (1774-1841), Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire, Comprehending A General Survey of the Picturesque Scenery, Remains of Antiquity, Historical Events, Peculiar Manners, and Commercial Situations of That Interesting Portion of the British Empire. (1803), Chapter 9

## 1804 Waterfall by a mill [Dolmelynllyn?]

We procured our guide (a very pretty Welsh woman) from the neighbouring mill ... to the waterfall (Dolmelynllyn)

Winnington, Elisabeth, 'Tour into North Wales September 1804', National Museum and Art Gallery, Cardiff, 147085/913(42.9)W73, pp. 7-8

#### 1805?

Melin Garreg near Llwyngynfelyn, f. 120

Another epitaph at Eglwys Fach 'George, infant son of Frances and Ann Chalmer of Dovey Bank. He built a house at Melin Garreg and called it Dovey Bank, **f. 129v** 

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), (1761-1849), NLW MS 1762Bii Notebook 3 [Journal XVI?? or XYZ], 1805?

#### 1805

Maesypandy (Rev Mr Vanney Wynne)

Stephens, L., [Stephens, J.?], Cardiff Central Library, MS 1.179, p. 65

1806 Whitebrook [on the Wye] formerly a wire mill, now a paper mill

Heath, Charles, Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey including a variety of other particulars deserving the stranger's notice relating to that much admired ruin and its neighbourhood. The whole never before published collected from original papers and unquestionable authorities. 1806 (and at least 11 editions to 1828), The note is from the 10<sup>th</sup> edition, dated 1823 which has no page numbers.

#### 1811 Mumbles

Mr Wallis's mill at the Mumbles for sawing and polishing marble ...

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain)

NLW MS 1659B, Notes on South Wales. Notes made by Walter Davies on a journey undertaken on behalf of the Board of Agriculture through Brecknockshire, Monmouthshire, and Glamorgan [1811], and dealing particularly with the geology of the counties and with their agriculture and other industries, p. 88

# 1811 (after)

Manufactories of wood acid sugar of lead – tar etc. at Melingrydan, near Neath were worked about 10 years. Richardsone became bankrupt in 1811. Advert for the sale of the lease in the Cambrian 30.3.1811, 38 years of a 50 year lease being then unexpired. **f. 407 v** 

Cardigan<sup>shire</sup> Carding and shubbing Manufactories at Melindwr on the borders of Montgom **f. 414v** 

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), (1761-1849), NLW MS 1759B (2 sets of vols), Agriculture in South Wales

#### 1812 Corwen

A stream runs at the back of the inn surrounded by a mill and some cottages of the most rude and vulgar appearance.

Anon, (probably Henrietta Hurrell, Suffolk), A Journey through England and Wales, 1812, John Rylands Library, Manchester, Eng mss. 421, p. 80



PLATE 8 Colwyn Mill near Corwen Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Wales

## 1815 (about)

A pretty little tucking mill tumbles in a shower bath from Ty'nyllwy grounds: ... From hence I proceeded upwards to Matcole Mill which is now new building for Mr Hughes of Ty y llwyn. ...

Johnes, Thomas and Payne, Henry Thomas, (Archdeacon), (1757-1832)

Transcript of a Journal of a Tour from Aberystwyth to Llanbedr [about 10 miles south-east of Brecon?] c. 1815, NLW Cwrtmawr 101C MS 101, pp. 4-5

#### 1815

Made an excursion to Holywell to see St Winifred's well, which turns a mill at 25 yards.

Porter family, Diary of trip from Birlingham on Monday July 17 1815 to Wales

Worcestershire Record Office, BA 3940 Parcel 64(i) ref: 705:262, Aug 18th

#### 1815

A cotton mill was erected some time since near Haverfordwest which was relinquished as an unprofitable speculation.

Rees, Thomas, (1777-1864), A Topographical and Historical Description of the Counties of South Wales, (London, 1815), For 'The Beauties of England and Wales: or, original delineations, topographical, historical and descriptive of each country'.

complete edition 1815, p. 761, based on Rees, Thomas, A topographical and historical description of Cardiganshire: containing an account of its towns, castles, antiquities, churches, monuments, public edifices, picturesque scenery, the residences of the nobility, gentry, & c.; accompanied with biographical notices of eminent and learned men to whom this county has given birth, London, (1810)

#### 1816 Haverfordwest

There is a brown paper mill near the town and a woollen factory a mile & half. The Whittles are made there.

Coare, Mary, ? Centre for Kentish Studies U1823/8Z4, p. 10 (9th September, 1816)

#### 1820

In the vicinity of Penrhyn is a curious mill, to grind chert, quartz, and flints, for the use of the porcelain and delph-ware potteries.

Leigh, Samuel, A new picture of England and Wales (1820), p. ?

#### 1837

Melin Griffith iron and tin works (between Caerphilly and Pontypridd)

'The river looks muddy from being dammed up for the Tin works at Melin Griffydd. '

Kenyon, Louise Charlotte, Tour in 1837, Shropshire Records and Archive Centre, 549/285

# 1839 Castell Collen [Between Builth Wells and Newbridge]

... cross the Ithon on an old and singularly constructed bridge, in one of the most romantic little valleys imaginable ... where stands an old mill, looking as if it only waited for some worthy pencil to immortalise its hoary charms, and then tumble quietly down, with old age.

Twamley, Louisa Anne, The annual of British Landscape Scenery; An autumn ramble on the Wye, (London: 1839), p. 138

#### 1846 Valle Crucis

a little stream runs at the back of the abbey, skirting its gardens and turning a corn mill in its passage to the Dee.

Dovaston, S., Miss, A Few Remarks on a tour to Shropshire and north Wales, 1846

Cardiff Central Library, MS 3.149

# 15 July 1848 [Caernarfon]

Visited the summer house at Coed Felin

Weston, Elizabeth, (1794 or 1795-1878), Journal of a tour, 1848, NLW MS 24034B, f. 5

## 1850 Ffestiniog slate quarries

The first object which attracts the eye is the inclined plane, down which the trams filled with slate are sent with great velocity. As the filled one descends, the empty one ascends. The pullies [sic] are formed of strong wire ropes. After ascending a steep zigzag walk we came upon a platform on which are deposited the slates ready prepared for exportation, and from which the refuse of the quarries is discharged, forming a steep bank of rough stones. From this platform...we ascended to the next. We passed through a tunnel 900 feet in length in train carts drawn by a horse. We descended to the bottom of the upper lift by means of the water incline – that is a box-shaped machine on which the trams are placed to be conveyed up & down, worked by a water mill.

Journal of Eliza Ann Roche (née Madocks) 1850, NLW Ynsyfor collection.

#### *1851*

At Melin Felindre, on the route to Pumlumon, is a romantic cataract;

Cathrall, William, Wanderings in North Wales: a road and railway guide-book, comprising curious and interesting historical information ... 1851 (Kindle)

#### 1891

Cenarth (mill illustrated)

Newcastle Emlyn

turbines in the old mill building

Hissey, James John, Across England in a Dog Cart: from London to St. David's and back, (1891), pp. 267-279

## RHAEADR Y PANDY, PENMACHNO

## 20 August 1766

Rhaeadr y Wennol; Rhaeadr y Pandy, Penmachno

Anon [member of the Yorke family?], Flintshire Record Office, D/E/1209 [continued], p. 25

#### 7 October 1769

To Rhaiadr y Wennol and Rhaiadr y Pandy Penmachno

Grimston, James Bucknall, Sir, (Third Viscount Grimston, 1749-1809)

A Tour in Wales, 1769, Hertfordshire Record Office D/EV/F15-19); Report on the manuscripts of the Earl of Gorhambury, Historic Monuments Commission Report, (HMSO, 1906), pp. 242-283

## 1 August 1797

Hence, by a road almost impassable for a carriage, to another famous fall called Pandy-Pen-Machno.

Twinning, Thomas, (1735 – 1804) A Holiday Tour in England and Wales. From a Diary kept in 1797, published in 'The recreations and studies of a country clergyman of the 18th century' p. 212

#### 1798-1801

Somewhat more than half a mile beyond this we stopped at a fulling mill, near a bridge called Pont y Pandy, the bridge of the fulling mill. Here is a cataract, called Rhaeadr y Craig Llwyd, truly romantic and picturesque.

Bingley, William, North Wales including its Scenery, Antiquities, Customs and Sketches of its Natural History, delineated from two excursions through all the interesting parts of that country during the summers of 1798 and 1801, (London, 1800), p. 347, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1804)

#### 23 March 1804

Pandy Penmachno – striped cloths on the tenters – dark red and blue for women's gowns.

Davies, Walter, (Gwallter Mechain), (1761-1849), NLW MS 1755Bii, notebook 2, Journal etc. continued from no VIII (Severn) [sic]