

Faunula Grustensis,  
the Natural History of  
the Parish of Llanrwst



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By John Williams

Edited by John Edmondson

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To Jack Smith<sup>1</sup>



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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: Photograph of John Williams, taken from a print inserted into a copy of *Faunula Grustensis* in Llandudno Library. Courtesy of Conway County Borough Council (Conwy Libraries).

The following figures are taken from the first edition of J.E. Smith's *English Botany*, illustrated by J. Sowerby, published from 1790 to 1814. Courtesy of the Linnean Society of London.

- Fig. 1: *Lloydia serotina*, Snowdon Lily.
- Fig. 2: *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, Marsh Gentian.
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- Fig. 4: *Meconopsis cambrica*, Welsh Poppy.
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## PREFACE

*My principal motive in compiling this treatise, was to give a Catalogue of the Animals, Plants, Minerals, &c. which this parish contains, so that we might have some idea of what is, and what is not to be found in it; but as this itself would have been dry and uninteresting to many, I have endeavoured to collect as many facts relative to its general history, commerce, agriculture, &c. as would become the limits allotted to my little Fauna.*

*In the general observations upon the Parish I have taken some anecdotes, &c. from Sir John Wynne's History of the Gwydir family; I have also collected some hints from the Tours of that genius, that Star, and the Ornament of Wales, the celebrated Mr. Pennant; A gentleman, born to enjoy the smiles of fortune, who sacrificed his case to travel the whole kingdom, to climb the dreary Alps of Wales, Scotland, and England, and described them with so much elegance, candour, and exactness, that he has scarcely left a room for another to improve upon him. He explored and described the Animal productions of Britain and India, so elegant as not to be excelled.*

*Mr. Pennant is not the only one of our countrymen who is distinguished in the field of Natural History, though He is the principal; but the name of Llwyd adorn the Synopsis of Ray; Davies and Griffith, the English Botany of Sir. J. E. Smith, and several other works: — The last mentioned Gentleman, who is still living (at Garn, near Denbigh), I have had occasion to name him very frequently in the Catalogue of Indigenous Plants; as he in his younger days explored the productions of all the mountains and valleys in North Wales, and therefore he is acquainted with the habitats of the rare Plants; Although He has the genius of Pennant, yet instead of imitating him, he communicated the fruits of his labours to other writers.*

*Here lived in this Parish a few years back, a natural genius for Plants, this was Mr. Richard Roberts of Melin y coed; who, with his son, Mr. David Roberts, Surgeon, knew British Plants very well, and they have noted down the habitats of many species on the margin of Dr. Withering's Arrangement of British Plants, which I have now by me, and I have in every instance named him wherever I copied his habitats, or places of growth.*

*I am not aware that a book of this kind has been before published in Wales; yet the spirit for reading is very prevalent among us, especially on Divinity and Poetry. If it was possible to raise an emulation in some to*

*shine in the Arts and Sciences also, it would certainly tend in some way to advance, not only their own interest, but the general prosperity of Wales. In England, Scotland, and Ireland, there are several public Botanic Gardens, besides the many Schools for Medicine, &c.; but in Wales we have not one of either, therefore how can she nurture her geniuses?*

*The medical notes after some species of the Indigenous Plants will be found worth of the attention of every Practitioner.*

*The places which contain the Garden Plants are principally, Gwydir, Mr. Griffith's (Attorney), my own, and few others.*

*With regard to the utility of this little Pantology, I have only to hope it may prove worthy of that patronage that I have been favoured with.*

JOHN WILLIAMS.

LLANRWST. }

May 28th, 1830. }



Photograph of John Williams, taken from a print inserted into a copy of *Faunula Grustensis* in Llandudno Library. Courtesy of Conway County Borough Council (Conwy Libraries).

Faunula Grustensis:  
being an outline of the  
NATURAL CONTENTS  
of the  
PARISH OF LLANRWST:  
Comprehending some account of its  
GENERAL HISTORY,  
COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE;  
ALSO,  
A Triglott Catalogue  
*(In Latin, English, and Welsh)*  
OF THE ANIMALS AND PLANTS FOUND IN IT,  
WITH SOME NOTES THEREON;  
TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A RUDIMENTAL VIEW OF ITS CHEMISTRY;  
AND A CATALOGUE  
*(in Latin, English, and Welsh)*  
OF THE  
Diseases that have occurred therein.

BY JOHN WILLIAMS

It is ridiculous in a man to travel for improvements, while he remains ignorant of those things that are about him at home.

“Hic patet ingeniis campus.”<sup>2</sup>

Llanwrst:  
PRINTED BY JOHN JONES  
1830.

TO  
J. W. GRIFFITH, ESQ.<sup>3</sup>  
OF GARN,  
THIS  
LITTLE TREATISE  
IS DEDICATED,  
IN TOKEN  
Of the highest admiration of his worth,  
BY  
HIS HUMBLE  
AND MOST DEVOTED SERVANT,  
THE AUTHOR.



# CHAPTER 1

## LLANRWST PARISH

The subject of the following pages, the Parish of Llanrwst, is partly in the County of Denbigh, and partly in the County of Carnarvon. The town of Llanrwst is in the County of Denbigh, situated on the banks of the river Conwy, in Lat. 53°. 6'. N. and Long. 4°. 4' W. about 12 miles S. E. of Aberconwy, 23 miles E. of Bangor, 20 miles W. of Denbigh, and 23 miles N. of Corwen.<sup>4</sup>

The Parish is sub-divided into eight townships, viz. Gwydir, Dre isa', Dre ucha', Garthgyfannedd, Maethebrwyd, Tybrith isa', Tybrith ucha', and Garthgarmon; all in the County of Denbigh and the Hundred of Uwchduldas, excepting the township of Gwydir, which is in Carnarvonshire, and the hundred of Nantconwy.

The Parish is above 40 miles in circumference; it extends from the top of Moel Seisiog, east, to the top of Moel Siabod, west, which is a distance of 12 miles; and from Gwahallwy, south, to Bryn Morfydd, north, a distance of above 8 miles; its form, however, is very irregular, for the township of Gwydir juts out like a promontory, to the top of Moel Siabod, so that its superficial contents, in square acres, would not fill a circle of 30 miles in circumference.

The Parish is bounded by Eglwysfach, Trefriw, Llanrhychwyn, Capel curig (Llandegai), Dolwyddelen, Bettws y coed, Penmachno, Ysptyty, Pentre'rfoelas (Llanefydd), Gwytherin, Llangerniw, and Llanddoged; Its boundaries are as follows :—

There is a little beyond Penlown a small rivulet running into the river Conwy: beginning there, we go along the stream by Careg-Ednyfed to Cae'r brychiad, then to Tan y bryn, and along the road to Pen bryn ddoged, thence to Pen y garth, and along a small rivulet to Pont y groes:— here we are to stop, then crossing the Parish of Llanddoged for about 300 yards, until we come to Trwyn swch; then rounding a little, we come near Hafod lom, and thence to Bryn Morfydd, then straight to Efal ucha', and along the river by Bryn morfydd bach to the place we left before, namely Pont y groes; from here we are to follow the course of the stream on the left, until we come near Cae'r faban, we are to encompass the fields of Cae'r faban, and

follow a small rivulet to the mountain called Mynydd bach; then pass to Waen oer on the right, and up to Cefn Fadog, and then to Farm yard; thence descend along a rivulet to Bodwilym, then up another small river to the mountain, which is about one mile distant; in the mountain turn on the left, along the Parish of Llangernyw, to near Bodrach (leaving Bodrach about 1/4 mile to the left) and proceed for about half a mile, down to a river called Afon panda budr (or Tudur), which empties itself into the Elwy; then along this river to a place called *y Gloddfa*, which is about one mile distant; thence along the mountain to Moelogwen, and from there descend to Nant Moelogwen, and follow the course of a river called Afon derfyn (for about one mile and a half) to two stone quarries, thence straight to a river called Afon ddu, then up to Cerrig y lladron, and from there ascend to the top of Moel seisiog (which is two miles distant from Afon ddu). Three Parishes meet on the top of Moel seisiog, viz. Gwytherin, Llanwrst, and Llanefydd; thence we descend to Croes y bryn, then over Pen bryn ffolt, through Bwlch gwyn, and over Pen y fron to Craig hir; going along the right side of Craig hir, through Mawnog yr odaeth, until we come to Ty'n y pant (through all this mountain there is a ditch marked out to distinguish the boundaries from Moel seisiog to Ty'n y pant); as we proceed we leave the mountain, and reach Hafotty gwyn; thence to Gwahallwy, and along the river to Rhydlanfair, and follow the course of the river Conwy as far down as Aber sych (about 400 yards below Cwm lanerch), here we cross the Conwy, and follow this brook (though frequently dry); up through the wood of Carreg walch to Park rhisglog; then following an old ridge of earth to the lake, and pass the upper end of it to Llidiart cil ystent, thence to Fuches las, and then going up the brook by the *murddyn*<sup>5</sup> of Ty'n y nant, through the field of Bwlch yr haiarn to Fawnog fawr; then, following a small stream from this *Fawnog*<sup>6</sup>, to Llyn Pencraig; thence, along Pencraig river, to the river Llugwy, and follow the course of it down, for about mile and a half; then crossing the Llugwy, and follow the course of a brook near Hendre-rhysgethin till we come near Dôl dywennydd; we encompass the fields of Dôl dywennydd, along a fence, to Pentre du, thence along a rivulet to Rhiw-Gwyddelan (Rhiwddolion); from there we follow a brook to Trum y cwm celyn, then to Carreg-ysgrifen, in the Ffrith of Tŷ newydd, and from there to the old turbary of Dolgam, then to the top of Helmau Hywel, and from there to the corner of Clawdd cefn Llywelyn, and Clawdd y ffrith dywyn, to Clogwyn llwyd; thence to Marddwr llwyn graienig, and along the river to Rhaiadr y foel, then through Llŷn and Cwm y foel, to the top of Moel Siabod; thence in a line to Carnedd moel y cwm, and down to Ynys Bleddyn, by a hedge dividing the farms of Cwm-clawdd and Garth, then through the two lakes, and along the river Llugwy by Capel curig, to the



lower end of Dôl y capel, and as far as Crachfryn; here we are to cross the Llugwy, and follow the river called Haprech, to Llyn bychan, thence in a straight line to Llidiardau dwbwl, then to Llyn Bodgynwyd; crossing the pool, and up to Pen y cefn hirfaes, then to Bwlch y groes, where there is a cross mark, to Pen drain llwydion, and behind Bwlch y gwynt to Bryn mawr in Llanrhychwyn mountain; thence to Rhaiadr Rrst, and following the stream to the Cataract called Rhaiadr y Park mawr, and along the river to the road leading to Trefriw, crossing this road to the Paddock, and instead of following the river, we are to cross the Paddock, and along the hollowness called the Old river, under Ty'n twll, to the fence separating the fields of Ty'n twll and Pant y carw, and along this fence through Llog mawr to the river Conwy, opposite Plas-isa'.

We cross the Paddock next the road, in a crooked direction, to the opposite wall, within 20 yards to the S. corner; then crossing about 10 yards of the corner of the next Paddock over the ditch to Car newydd, and cross this field close by a Poplar tree, and over the path that leads to Ysgubor wên (within 40 yards to the embankment) then crossing a corner of the next field straight to the rivulet, by an Alder tree over the embankment, which is about 40 yards below the path and bridge, then along the rivulet to the Pool, which is about 60 yards from the Alder tree, then turning to the left along another brook, through a dingle in the corner of Bryn ysgubor wên to the wall; here we cross the Llanrhychwyn river, and the embankment in Cae glâs; thence straight to within 20 yards of the lowest corner of the plantation opposite Ty'n twll; then crossing this field within about 10 yards along the ditch, and over the bridge to the next field, and through it by a pond, to an Oak tree near the next hedge (which is about 50 yards from the W. ditch), and over the hedge to Cae'r dderwen, then nearly straight to within 20 yards of its west corner and ditch; then in a crooked direction (for about 30 yards) to the hedge (within about 60 yards from the ditch); then over this hedge to Cae pella', then through the field by two small ponds, along the Camlas, to the fence that separates the farms of Ty'n twll and Pant y carw; then along the fence through Llog mawr and Castell rhedyn, straight to the river Conwy, opposite Plas-isa'.

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\* The river was formerly the boundary from this road to the river Conwy, and as this river now runs another way, I shall be more particular with the boundary here.

## Notes

1. A copy from the library of Jack Smith of Handforth, Cheshire, was used to prepare this edition. See Acknowledgments.
2. Here is a field open to talent (Claudian, c. 370–404).
3. Landowner, of Garn, Henllan, Denbigh, 1763–1834; MP for Denbigh, 1818–1826.
4. Actually NW (not N) of Corwen.
5. Ruin.
6. Peat bog.

## CHAPTER 2

### CHURCHES AND OTHER BUILDINGS

There are within this parish three places of Public worship, belonging to the Established Church, and about ten Dissenting Chapels. One Church is in the township of Garthgarmon, called Capel Garmon, or St. Germain's Chapel, a Chapel of ease belonging to the Parish Church; another in the Township of Gwydir, a Capel of ease belonging to the Right Honourable Lord Willoughby de Eresby<sup>7</sup>. The Parish Church which is in the town is situated close to the river side. It is not exactly known when the Church was first built, but we may deduce from the following account, given us by Mr. Pennant, that it was first built about the year 1170. He says, "The ground on which it is built is said to have been given by Rhun, the son of Nefydd hardd, to expiate the foul murder of Prince Idwal, son of Owen Gwynedd, slain by order of his foster-father, Nefydd, to whom he had been intrusted." The Church is dedicated to *Grustus* or *Grwst*, a British Saint who lived in the sixth century, whose genealogy may be seen in the Genealogy of the Saints, and in the Cambro Briton, No. 27, as follows: "GRWST, the son of Gwaith Hengaer ab Elffin ab Urien. His mother was Euronwy, or Crierwy, the daughter of Clydno Eiddyn ab Cynwyd Cynwydion ab Cynfelyn. Llanrwst in Denbighshire is dedicated to him." Therefore, Mr. Pennant was mistaken when he said it was dedicated to St. Rystyd.

We may also infer, from the account which Sir John Wynne gives us, that the original building was burnt down in the reign of Edward the fourth, in consequence of "David ab Jenkin, and other Captaines of the Lancastrian faction, having wasted with fire and sword the suburbs of the town of Denbigh. In revenge of this, Edward the fourth sent William Earle of Pembroke, with a great army, to waste the mountaine countreys of Carnarvon and Merioneth shires, and take the Castle of Harddlech, which Earl did execute his charges to the full, as witnesses this Welsh rime:

"Harddlech a Diabech pop dôr—yn cunnen,  
"Nanconway yn farwor,

“Mil a phedwar cant mae Ior,  
 “A thrugain ac wyth rhagor.”

*Gwydir family*, p. 88.

And in p. 90 Sir John Wynne has these words:—

“Thus both her houses, Henblas and Brynnyllty, escaped the Earl Herbert’s desolation, though the same consumed the whole burrough of Llanrwst, and all of the vale of Conway besides, *to cold coals*, whereof the print is not yet extant, the very stones of the ruins of manie habitations, in and along my demaysnes carrying yet the colour of the fire.” Thus the original Church was burnt down Anno 1468, therefore the last building of it may be fixed to about the year 1470. It used to be a Rectory and a Vicarage; the former valued in the King’s books at £12, and the latter at £6. 5s. 5d. which was discharged and united to the Rectory by Act of Parliament of the 29th and 30th, Car. II. The Poor’s rate annually raised is about £2700. The present Rector is the Rev. H. H. Edwards, A. M. of Pennant, Prebendary of Westminster, and is officiated by our worthy Clergyman, the Rev. J. Boulger.

The Church contains several reliques of antiquity: the Music gallery, the Pulpit, and the Reading-desk, were brought here from the Abbey of Conwy at Maenan, when that Monastery was dissolved. There are many monumental tables fixed to its walls; amongst them is a benefaction of one Evan Dafydd, of Brynmorfydd, who left to the poor of this parish the sum of £618. On the south wall there is a marble monument of Jane, the heiress of Cae’r berllan, an ancestor of J. W. Griffith, Esq. of Garn. There is also an excellent clock, a gift of its veneral Rector<sup>8</sup>.

To one end of the Church is attached a Chapel belonging to Gwydir, wherein many of that illustrious family are interred. As there is a printed paper containing a full account of the contents of this Chapel, I shall merely notice the most remarkable. It was erected by Sir Richard Wynne, in the year 1633; on the left, as we enter the Chapel from the Church, we see on the wall a Tablet of white marble, containing the pedigrees of Sir Richard Wynne, as far back as Owen Gwynedd, Prince of Wales, a period of 500 years. On the south side we see an aged, decaying elegance, two states columns of variegated marble; one, to the memory of Meredith Wynne, who died March, 1525, and the other to the memory of Sir John Wynne, who died March 1st, 1626, and Sydney his wife; these beautiful columns are in a dilapidating state. There are several elegant engravings on brass fixed to the wall, some of these Mr. Pennant pronounced to be the most beautiful he had ever seen, especially that of Dame Sarah Wynne, executed by William Vaughan. Her husband, Sir Richard Wynne, was a

gentleman of distinguished merit, and was buried distant from his country, in Wimbleton Church near London.

In the middle of the floor there are two Sculptures of great antiquity; one, the stone effigy of Howel Coetmor ab Griffith Vychan ab David Goch, natural son of David, brother to the last Prince of Wales, in armour, with this inscription: "Hic jacet Howel Coytmor ap Gruffyd Vychan ap Davyd Gam." His father, Griffith Vychan, was buried at Bettws, whose figure armed is in the Church there, with an Inscription. Howel was one of the grand-sons of Iddon, the Knight at Bettws. The other is the under part of the Stone coffin of Prince Llywelyn the great, "with the sides curiously cut into quatre-foils." That Prince is said to have been born at Dolwyddelen castle, A. D. 1174, who, during a long reign, defended his country valiant and honorably; concerning whose death, Wynn, in his History of Wales, says in p. 359: "To the great grief and dissatisfaction of all the Welsh, departed this life A. D. 1210, and was very honorably interred in the Abbey of Conwy, after he had reigned six and fifty years." To the Coffin is fixed a piece of brass with the following inscription:—

"This is the Coffin of Leolinus Magnus, Prince of Wales, who was buried in the Abbey of Conwy, which upon the dissolution was removed thence." That Abbey was translated to Maynan in the year 1289, so that our great Prince was not permitted a "*requiescat in pax*" for more than 40 years.

Near the Altar, within the Church, there is a large square flag with inscriptions about its sides to the memory of Sir John Wynne's five sons, as follows:—

"Monument : filiar : Jo : Wyn de Gwyder milit : et Baronet : qui obier : superstite patre : Jo : eques aurat : sepult : Lucæ Italiæ civitate libera Ao. Aeta 30. Di. 1613. Robert : in Art : Ma : Sacris iniciat : Ao. Aeta 24 Di. 1617. Tho : Rog : et Rog : in minore Aetate. Funus. Fumus. Fuimus ecce."

As we enter the Church yard, from this Chapel, the following inscription may be observed above the door:—

Rich : Wynn : de : Gwyder Mil : et Baronet : Reginae Majest :  
Thesaur : propriis : Nobiliss : defunct : patris : sumptibus struxit : An : Do :  
1634. Laus : et : Gloria : sol : Deo :

The Church-yard is ornamented with three Yews. These trees were held in great veneration by the Monks, as being very expressive in Church-yards and Convents; as an emblem of the immortality of the Soul, and as a mourning in the gloomy repository of the dead. They are said to be first plants in Church-yards for the following reason:— Formerly the principal warlike weapon was the Bow and Arrow, and as the Yew is the most pliant, and at the same time the hardest and strongest for that purpose, they were planted in a place common to all, in which every one might resort in case of

need. Mr. Pennant says, "It was a custom in old times on Palm Sunday to make this the substitute of the tree from which the Sunday took its name, to bless on that day the boughs; also to burn some of them to ashes; and with those, the Priests on the following Ashwednesday, signed the people on the forehead, saying,

*Momento homo! quod pulvis es, et in pulverem revertevis.*

Remember, Oh man! That thou art dust, and that unto dust thou shalt return.

And of the branches so blessed, it was customary in Rogation week to stick some in the fields, or at the times of processions."

The above author says in another place, that he saw in Fortingale churchyard an old "Yew-tree, whose trunk measured 56 1/2 feet in circumference."

Near the gate of the churchyard, on the left hand, we see a stone fixed to the end of a row of houses, with the following inscription upon it:

Jo : Winn de Gwedir Fil : Mauricii Miles et

Baronetta Fundavit, Ao. Di. 1610.

These are Almshouses left by Sir J. Wynne; of these, the Honourable Daines Barrington, in his Introduction to Sir John Wynne's History, says: "In 1610, Sir John Wynne erected at Llanrwst some Almshouses, (to which he gave the name of Jesus Hospital) for the reception of twelve poor men, and drew up regulations for the management of his benefaction. He also endowed the charity very liberally with the Rectorial tithes of Eglwysfach, which are now (1770) valued £200 per annum."

These are now (1830) valued at £400 per annum. They continued for near 200 years as Sir John Wynne left them, for charitable purposes; however, these and their endowments, namely the tithes above mentioned, Roe fawr, and Ty'n y fynwent, are now discontinued.

A little further on, and lower down on the same wall, there is another stone with the figure of a lamb upon it with this motto, "*Victima nostra*, 1615." This is said by some, to be taken from Ysppyty Ievan, when it ceased to be a Lordship of St. John of Jerusalem; but the country people have a tradition relating to the Almshouses founded upon it.

The town is now neatly built, since nearly all the houses which Mr. Pennant saw are rebuilt. It consists of five streets, four lanes, and a large market square, containing 342 houses and 1477 inhabitants. In the middle of the market square, upon a little eminence, called Bryn y botten, is the Town-hall, erected by Maurice Wynne, Esq. of Cae'r melwr, A. D. 1661. An adjournment of the general quarter Sessions were wont to be held in the hall, and old persons, now living, recollect the steps from the square, and the interior of the hall fitted up for that purpose.

At the east end of the town, near a row of large walnut trees, is the School-bank; this School, called the Free School, was erected about the same time, and for similar purposes, as the Almshouses. This institution has until lately been wholly neglected, but now under the encouraging auspices of the Right Honourable Lord Willoughby de Eresby, and the active exertions of the present Master and Mistress, it is become an excellent School, and likely to be inferior to none in Wales.

Crossing the river Conwy, the Bridge makes a fine example of architectural Genius: it was erected by Sir Richard Wynne, in the year 1636; designed by the celebrated Inigo Jones; and is, as Mr. Barrington observes, "so elegant a structure that it sufficiently speaks itself to be the work of a masterly architect." It consists of three arches, the middle 50 feet wide; it may be observed that two of the arches were built by a superior genius to the one who built the arch next to Gwydir; this last was built in the year 1703, which was 67 years after the others.

This bridge is remarkable for its being easily shaken; a lad, by forcibly falling his back against the parapet above the middle arch, may vibrate the whole structure. The Free Stone which built this bridge, is said to have been dug from a quarry in Afon hwch.

Before the building of this Bridge, and while the last mentioned arch was unfinished, there was a Ferry, near the Vicarage called Glan y borth (i. e. Ferry-bank.)

About half a mile from the town is lower Gwydir, which is the place where the first house of that name was built. It was once in the possession of Howel Coytmor, one of the grandsons of Iddon, the Knight at Bettws, which place was called after him and his brethren "The Beadhouse (*Bettws*) of the grandchildren of Iddon," now Bettws y coed. Some one of Howel Coytmor's posterity sold Gwydir place to Meredydd ap Ievan, great grandfather to Sir John Wynne. This Meredydd built a new house in Gwydir about the year 1480 (ten years after the building of the Church), which was enlarged by his son John Wynn ap Meredydd, in the year 1555, four years before his death. A great part of the house is now pulled down, there being no building round a greater and lesser court as it was when Mr. Pennant saw it. That part which was built by Meredydd still remains, and it contains some magnificent and venerable rooms, but if compared to the present mode of building they make but a dismal appearance, as the windows are small and few. There are some furniture in the house made from the druidical oaks of ancient times, and likely to remain sound for many ages yet to come. The Cradle which nurtured Sir John and Sir Richard Wynne is still to be seen. In the Hall there is fixed to one end of the room the effigies of Augustus and Julius Cæsars, armed, with the motto "*Nec timet, nec tumet*." They are now

repairing the room above it, which, when finished, will make a noble appearance. Above the entrance gate there is J. W. 1555. In the middle of the court, (which was once surrounded by the house) there is a large bone, which appears to be the rib of some species of Whale; but according to the vulgar opinion, it is the rib of the Duncow (*y Fuwch frech*), killed by the Earl of Warwick.

The pleasure ground is pleasantly laid<sup>10</sup> and contains a great number of good plants; her Ladyship sends down new plants every year.

There are many conjectures concerning the etymology of Gwydir; some will have it to be *Gwaed-dir*, others *Gwydd-dir*, woodland, as it was formerly a Forest of most noble trees; and other again, from *Gwy-dir*, watery-land, being subject to be overflowed. Mr. Pennant will have it *Gwaed-dir*, Blood-land, "from the battles fought here by Llywarch Hen, about the year 610; or perhaps from the cruel battle in 952, and a third may be added, between Gruffudd ap Cynan ap Trahaearn ap Cradog." Wynn in his History of Wales, p. 53, says, "Dyfnwal and Rodri, the sons of Howel Dha, were slain in the battle fought near Llanrwst, in the year 952, by the sons of Edwal Foel;" and in p. 55 he says, "that the sons of Howel Dha marched from South Wales as far as Llanrwst, upon the river Conwy, where Ievaf and Iago met them, a very cruel battle" ensued upon this, and a very great number were slain on both sides, among whom were Anarawd the son of Gwriad the son of Roderick the great; and Edwin the son of Howel Dha. But the victory plainly favoured the brothers Ievaf and Iago, the Princes of North Wales."

Upper Gwydir is situated on an eminence, amongst trees, high above the lower, commanding a beautiful view of the Vale of Conway, and the serpentine gliding of the river; and probably built as a summer-house for that purpose, by Sir John Wynne, who began it in the year 1604. This house is said to have been almost covered with inscriptions in different languages. But there is no remains at present of the original building. The Chapel, which was erected by Sir Richard Wynne, A. D. 1673, is very gay and beautiful; its paintings appear to have been of superior excellence. Divine Service is performed in this Chapel every Sunday afternoon, by the Rev. T. Davies, of Llanddodged.

It is said that Inigo Jones designed upper Gwydir, the Bridge, and the Chapel attached to the Church, that he was born in Dolwyddelen, that he was Christened by the name of Inco (others say Ynyr), which name he exchanged, or Latinized, into Ignatius, or Inigo, as sounding better; and

\* This battle is said to have been fought at the place called Llinog isa' — near the place are Lletty 'r clef, and Sarn waedlyd, supposed to have their origin from the above circumstance.



that he was patronised by Sir John Wynne, who early perceived in him strong marks of a promising genius. The writers of his life, however, will have him to be a Londoner, the son of a Clothier, who in all probability, as Mr Pennant says, was from this part of Wales. There are some striking anecdotes respecting Jones, shewing that he had some respect for the Snowdon mountains. There are also several traditions handed down to us respecting his Father and him with the Gwydir family<sup>11</sup>.

The History of the Illustrious family of Gwydir is very interesting to those acquainted with Heraldry, as they are recorded to have sprung from the most ancient nobility in Wales; altho' perhaps too much stress is generally put upon Pedigrees and Families; the thought of having descended of Noble and Valiant Ancestors can add but little to the real worth of a man; yet it is a vanity from which no man is exempt. Our national character has the stain of being excessive in this particular. But the family of Gwydir, from the time of Meredydd ap Ievan to the death of Sir Richard Wynne, which was a period of near 200 years, have left behind them lasting monuments of their worth in this Parish where they lived; it is to them we are beholden for the Bridge, the Town Hall, the Almshouses, the School Bank, and other places; these are testimonies that they were a blessing to their neighbourhood. Although Mr. Pennant was informed that tradition says, "Sir John Wynne was a great oppressor, and therefore have sent his perturbed Spirit to Rhaiadr y Wennol." I believe this tradition to have been originally founded on some other person, for the *traditionists* say, "it was him or some other one;" — for Sir John Wynne, as Mr Barrington says, "died 1626, at the age of 73, much lamented both by his family and neighbourhood." He was a lover of his country, and a friend to the interests of his tenants and neighbours; in his time the Parish of Llanrwst was under the immediate patronage of a kind Guardian. He encouraged the rustic sports of his inferiors, and expended his money to keep up a large establishment among his tenants. About his time there were Baronets and Esquires in places that are now occupied by labouring Farmers. He, in his history, gives us the following anecdote, "Robin Iachwr, the greatest antiquary of the country, being at Gwedir with my grandfather, and going one day to a *Chwareufa Gampau* where the country was assembled at a place called Gardd y felin,\* in the parish of Llanrwst, asked, whether he would command him any service thither, Nothing, said my grandfather, having a nosegay in his hand by chance, but deliver this nosegay to the best gentleman thou sees in this company, upon the credit of thy skill, who

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There was a field called Cae'r hen ardd, adjoining Llanrwst, which was sold in allotments for building, in the year 1811-1812, now known by the name of Scotland, and probably Gardd y felin, stood between this field and Felin isa'. Mr. R. OWEN.

delivered the same with the protestation of his charge, in the presence of all the company, to Llyn ap David, Rys Llyn ap David's father. I cannot however get his pedigree, nor Lancelot's wife's pedigree in any certaintie to join them with ours; the reason is, that poverty soon forgets when it be descended; for it is an ancient received saying, There is no poverty but is descended of nobilitie; nor noe nobilitie but is descended of beggarie

When Adam delv'd, and Eva span,  
 Who was then a gentleman?  
 Then came the churl and gathered good,  
 And thence arose the gentle blood."

Above Gwydir is Carreg Walch\*, the retreat of the brave David ap Jenkin, mentioned before in p. 5, of whom Sir John Wynne writes to the following effect:—

"In this wood there formerly lived a famous outlaw, a Captain of the Lancastrian faction, who had many contentions with another Outlaw and Captain, Howel ap Ievan ap Rhys Gethin, for the Sovereignty of this country, who lived in Dolwyddelen Castle, in the beginning of Edward the fourth his raigne. David ap Jenkin being superior to him, in the end he drew a draught for him, and took him to his bed with his concubine, performing by craft, what he could not by force, and brought him to Conway Castle. Thus, after many bickering between Howel and David ap Jenkin, David being too weake, was fain to flie the Countrey, and to goe to Ireland, where he was a yeare, or thereabout. In the end he returned in the Summer time, haveing himselfe and all his followers clad in greene, who, being come into the Countrey, he dispersed here and there among his friends, lurking by day, and walkeing in the night for feare of his adversaries; and such of the Countrey as happened to have a sight of him and his followers, said that they were the fairies, and soe ran away. All the whole Countrey then was but a forrest, rough and spacious as it is still, but then waste of inhabitants, and all overgrowne with woods; for Owen Glyndwrs warres beginning in Anno 1400, continued fifteen yeares, which brought such a desolation, that green grasse grew on the market place in Llanrwst, called Bryn y botten, and the deere fled into the churchyard, as it is reported. This desolation arose from Owen Glyndwr's policie, to bring all things to waste, that the English

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\* The range of hills covered with wood, and runs towards Bettws, are called *Carreg walch* or *Carreg y gwalch*, i.e. Hawkstone or Falconstone, which stone is to be seen on the left side of the road between Gwydir and Bettws y coed, opposite the lowest part of Cwm lannerch farm. One of the precipices is called Clogwyn yr Ogof (Precipice of the Cave) and the Cave retains the name of Ogof Shenkin to this day.

should find no strength, nor resting place. The country being brought to such a desolation, could not be replanted in haste; and the warres of York and Lancaster happening some fifteen years after, this countrey being the chiefest fastness of North Wales, was kept by David ap Jenkin, a Captaine of the Lancastrian faction, fifteen years in Edward the fourth his time, who sent diverse Captains to besiege him, who wasted the countrey, while he kept his rocke of Carreg y walch”.

*Gwedir family*, p. 133.

On the right of Gwydir we go up Nant bwlch yr haiarn\*, there is a Cataract (called Rhaiaadr y Parc mawr), above 100 feet deep, but the quantity of water that generally flows is not very large, otherwise it would have been the best cascade in the County.

Lead mines abound in this place, and have been dug for ages, as there have been many reliques found which proved that the Romans explored the bowels of this Nant; Sir John Wynne also mentions them in his letter to Sir Hugh Myddleton, Sept. 1st, 1625:—

“My skill ys little, and my experience none at all in such matters; yet I ever had a desire to further my country in such actions as might be for their profit, and leave a remembrance of my endeavours; but hindered with other matters, I have onelie wished well, and done nothinge.

I have leade ore on my ground in great store, and other minerals neare my house, yf it please you to come hither, being not above two daies journey from you, you shall be most kindly welcome; &c. &c.”

The Stones of this Nant is principally of the Schistose kind, and a large quantity of Calamine is found in it. The *Thlaspi alpestre*<sup>14</sup> grows abundantly near the Cataract, first observed by J. W. Griffith, Esq., of Garn. In summer the beautiful *Cincindelia campestris*<sup>15</sup> is more abundant here than I have observed it in any other place. The *Myrica Gale*, or Bog Myrtle, is abundant here, and “perfumes the air with its spicy smell.” In summer branches of the plant are taken and laid between the bed clothes to drive away fleas, which they are said to do very effectually. When we have ascended the mountain we find an abundance of *Empetrum nigrum*, or Crow-berry, Butterwort, Sundew, &c. About a mile to the left is a large lake called Llyn y Parc rhisglog. This Parc rhisglog was formerly covered with wood and fine deer; but now it is full of their rotten remains, turberies.

A little to the right towards Llanrhychwyn there is a Slate quarry of that species called *Schistus niger*.

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\*\*Or more properly Bwlch Rhun (son of Nefydd hardd), who in this time possessed much land about Llanrwst.

Farther on about one mile and a half on the right there is another lake, called Llyn Geirionydd, near which place the celebrated Bard Taliesin lived; as the *Murddyn* of his house is still to be seen about 300 yards this side of the lake. He flourished about the year 560, and is called Taliesyn the Chief of Bards to this day.

This mountain is barren, consisting of Heaths and Bogs, but lately Lord Willoughby de Eresby has planted several hundred thousands of trees, so that in few years it will be much more valuable than it has been, since the great arboreal desolation.

When we cross the mountain we descend a great steep to Glyn Llugwy, through the bottom of which the river Llugwy flows; the vale is very fertile in grass, oats, and sometimes barley. A few miles higher towards Snowdon is a Chapel of ease belonging to Llandegai, called Capel-curig, situated at the foot of Moel Siabod. This Village is adorned by an extraordinarily large Inn, which is very much frequented in summer.

The lakes near the Inn are in great repute among the Anglers. The *Papaver cambricum*<sup>16</sup>, *Trollius europaeus*, *Lobelia Dortmanna*, *Subularia*, *Isoëtes*, *Campanula hederacea*<sup>17</sup> &c. grows about this place.

As we ascend the farthest border of our parish, the summit of Moel Siabod, we have a beautiful view of Snowdon (whose ethereal head is frequently buried in the clouds) with all its Majestic train; this is the grandest prospect that can offer itself to the sight, the most perfect delineations in Theatres fall into contempt when compared to this. From the top of this Foel we have an excellent view of a large extent of surface from Merionethshire to Llandudno (and with a good Glass the Isle of Man, &c.) The mountains, vales, woods, lakes, and rivers, almost innumerable.

The *Saxifraga nivalis*, *stellaris*, *hypnoides*, &c., *Lycopodium alpinum*, *Selago*, *Selaginoides*, &c. and some other good plants are growing here. The *Turdus torquatus*, or Ring Ouzel, common below this place.

As we are here within view of Snowdon, I shall give the description Mr. Pennant gives of the view from the top of it, which is so beautiful and natural, that every one who has been there will readily conceive what he describes:—

“In a former tour I saw from it the County of Chester, the high hills of Yorkshire, part of the North of England, Scotland and Ireland, a plain view of the Isle of Man, and that of Anglesey extended like a map before me, with every rill visible. I took much pains to see this prospect to advantage, sat up at a farm till about twelve, and walked up the whole way. The night was remarkably fine and starry: towards morn the stars faded away, and left a short interval of darkness, which was soon dispersed by the dawn of day. The body of the sun appeared most distinct, with the rotundity

of the moon, before it rose high enough to render its beams too brilliant for our sight. The sea which bounded the western part was gilt by its rays, first in slender streaks, at length glowing with redness. The prospect was disclosed like the gradual drawing up of a curtain in a Theatre. We saw more and more till the heat became so powerful as to attract the mist from the various lakes, which in a slight degree obscured the prospect. The shadow was flung many miles, and shewed its bicapitated form; the Wyddfa making one, and Crib y distyll the other head. I counted this time between twenty and thirty lakes either in this County or Merionethshire.

It is seldom that the traveller gets a proper day to ascend Snowdon, for often when it appears clear, it becomes suddenly and unexpectedly enveloped in midst<sup>18</sup> by its attraction of clouds, which just before seemed remote and at great heights. The height of Snowdon is 3568 feet.”

Snowdonia contains a great number of rare plants, some of them I shall name:—

*Galium boreale*, *Alchemilla alpina*, *Parnassia palustris*, *Drosera longifolia*, *Anthericum serotinum*<sup>19</sup>, *Rumex digynus*<sup>20</sup>, *Polygonum viviparum*, *Saxifraga nivalis*, *stellaris*, *hypnoides*, *palmata*<sup>21</sup>, *pedatifida*<sup>22</sup>, &c.; *Silene acaulis*, *maritima*, *Cerastium alpinum*, *latifolium*, *Papaver cambricum*<sup>16</sup>, *Nymphaea lutea*, *Thalictrum minus*, *alpinum*, *Vaccinium Vitis-idaea*, *Subularia aquatica*, *Draba incana*, *hirta*, *Arabis hispida*<sup>23</sup>, *Hieracium alpinum*, *Serratula alpina*, *Salix herbacea*, &c.; *Rhodiola rosea*, *Lycopodium annotinum*, &c.; *Polypodium cambricum*, *Aspidium Lonchitis*<sup>24</sup>, *Oreopteris*, *Thelypteris*, *Dryopteris*, *Asplenium viride*, *marinum*, “*Septentrionale*”, *Scolopendrium Ceterach*<sup>25</sup>, *Pteris crispa*<sup>26</sup>, *Cyathea fragilis*<sup>27</sup>, *regia*<sup>28</sup>, *Woodsia hyperborea*<sup>29</sup>, *Isoetes lacustris*, *Pilularia aquatica*, &c.

The grasses on Snowdon, especially some species of *Festuca*, *Poa*, *Aira*, *Agrostis*, and some others, are very apt to become viviparous, which in the lower parts are not; at first I thought I had found several new species of grass, but after a more familiar acquaintance with them, I found, that this phenomenon is owing to a providential care for their preservation in that inhospitable region. They seldom have their hay harvest before August or September.

Beneath Moel Siabod towards the East is Dolwyddelen castle, said to have been built about the year 500, and gave birth to our brave Prince Llewelyn the great. It is situated on a high rock, inaccessible on one side, and consists of two square towers, one 40 feet by 25, the other 31 feet by 20, and a court in the middle. Lower down, near Tan y castell, there is a good Slate quarry. The Vale was formerly finely wooded, but now a tree is scarcely to be seen; the river Lleder or Elidir flows through its bottom. “The

Church, the Castle, and the house of Penanmen stand three square like a trivett, either a mile distant from the other. The Church formerly stood at Bryn y bedd, and removed by Meredith ap Ievan to the place where it now is, in the year 1512. One Ievan David ap Ednyfed, an Abergeley man, felled in one day eighteen oakes towards the building of a parte of Penanmen house.”

As we descend from Moel Siabod along the boundaries of Dolwyddelen, we come back to Coed Carreg walch by Pencraig and that tremendous Cataract, Rhaiadr y wennol (or wŷnol, i. e. furious). Mr. Pennant says “The noblest oaks in all Wales grew on this rock, within memory of man. I remember the stools of several which proved they were equal to any which flourish in the deepest soil; yet these rocks are totally destitute of earth for a considerable way.” There are still remaining several fine trees, growing upon barren rocks, and it appears that formerly all the mountains and vales were covered with trees; that Snowdonia was a one continued forest from Snowdon to Conway, of this we have indisputable authorities, and that this was the richest Deer-forest in Wales. We may frequently see on some high mountains near a habitation or the remains of one, perhaps a single tree, or perhaps an insulated copse that have withstood the frigid storms of many years. I have no doubt but the Fir and other hardy trees would grow on the very summit of Snowdon, for trees are found to grow in much colder countries than Snowdon is; instance Sweden, Norway, and its still more northern neighbourhood. The first planting of them is the most discouraging, for when they are young they are more apt to be nipped by the frost, but after they have begun to grow they shade one another and grow exceedingly fast. Sir John Wynne gives us the following account:—“Now you are to understand that in those dayes, the countrey of Nantconway was not only wooded, but also all Carnarvon, Merioneth, and Denbigh shires seemed to be but one continued forrest, having few inhabitants, though of all others Nantconway had the fewest, being the worst then and the seat of the warres, to whom the countrey paid contribution.”

Leaving the township of Gwydir we enter an extensive vale which contains several large farms—Cae’r melwr, Berth ddu, Cae’r berllan, Plas tirion, Rhyd y criau, Siamber wen, &c. on the ascent, Bryn dyffryn, Cyffdy, Hendrehouse, Oaklands, &c. To the right is the rock of Carreg walch; before us to the south, near Bettws, is Vedw deg mountains’ a little to the left of that is Pen gallt y Rhyg, then Moel-Drefriw and Nant Oakland, then Nant y rhiw, Nant y goron, Nant bwlch y gwynt, Cefn-efran, Nant y glyn, Bryn saith (whence seven Churches are seen), &c. To the west are Carnedd Llywelyn, Trefriw, and Llanrhychwyn mountains.