

Haverfordwest is a large; irregular town, built on the declivity of a hill, which is so steep towards the river, that the back window of the ground floors in one street, frequently overlook the roofs of the houses in another.

The castle ruins are very large, and present a grand object to the approach from Narbarth.

While we remained in this town, we made some enquiries about the price of provisions, for by the smallness of our inn expences, we were led to conclude, that every article must have been much cheaper here, than on the other side of the Severn. The difference between the prices of meat and bread, either here or there, was very immaterial. Poultry and fish were astonishingly cheap, and the very common cheese of the country sold from two-pence to three-pence a pound: this last article, indeed, was of so wretched a nature, that few Englishmen would venture to put a second morsel into their mouths. It is made from the combined milk of goats, sheep, mares and cows, and if any cheese should remain from the last year's stock, which is often the case, it is then chopped into minute pieces, and remixed with the new. It may easily be conceived that the cheese, by these means, contracts such a hardness, as to be almost proof against the edge of a knife, and such a rankness, that train oil is sweet in the comparison.

We were not however reduced, more than once, to the dilemma of using this composition, as the Cheshire and Gloucester cheeses are commonly to be met with in the inns of the principality.

As we were soon to traverse for several days a poor and miserable country, we thought it prudent to exchange a bank note at Haverfordwest, to prevent the difficulties, which might otherwise attend our passing it: but even here, we were delayed several hours before we could get money for it; at length, ten pounds were raised and offered for the note, provided I would endorse it. This is an extract from my first tour, and I hope to be excused for inserting it again, least it might have been imagined a *jeu d'esprit* of my own invention. The circumstance was a literal fact, but I am happy in adding, that I found no difficulty in exchanging a note of much larger value, in my second journey.

A particularity appears in the dress of the Pembrokeshire women, which, because it differs from the rest of the dominion, I shall attempt to describe.

The women, even in the midst of summer, generally wear a heavy cloth gown, with a hood hanging from it behind; and instead of a cap, a large handkerchief wrapt over their heads is tied under their chins. They have sometimes, tho' rarely, a small beaver hat with a very low crown.

On first seeing this fantastick head-dress, I really imagined that there had been an epidemical swelling or tooth-ach in the province.

It is possible, that this fashion might originate in Flanders, as Pembrokeshire was formerly settled by Flemings. In that low country this head-dress might have been thought a necessary preservation against the damps, and a national prejudice may have continued it in Wales, for more than six centuries.

This custom is peculiar to Pembrokeshire; for in the other counties of Wales, the women, as well as the men, wear large beaver hats with deep crowns, and with broad quaking brims flapping over their shoulders. Nay, even some of the better sort of people affect this covering: for I afterwards met, at Llandrindod Wells, three old ladies of the neighbourhood, who supped with us under the shade of their beavered umbrellas. The general prevalence of this latter custom recalled to my memory the fabulous history of Giraldus, concerning beavers being found on the Tywy banks in Cardiganshire and might induce a stranger to give some kind of credit to the legend.

From Haverfordwest, the road leads thro' a miserable country, leaving a ruined tower of Roche castle on the right hand, and winds down to the beach at Niwegal.

A Tour Through Monmouthshire and Wales (1777)
Henry Penruddocke Wyndham