

A

TOPOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY

OF

W A L E S,

COMPRISING THE

SEVERAL COUNTIES, CITIES, BOROUGHS, CORPORATE AND MARKET TOWNS,
PARISHES, CHAPELRIES, AND TOWNSHIPS,

WITH

HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL DESCRIPTIONS:

EMBELLISHED WITH

ENGRAVINGS OF THE ARMS OF THE BISHOPRICS, AND OF THE ARMS AND SEALS OF THE VARIOUS
CITIES AND MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS;

AND ILLUSTRATED BY

MAPS OF THE DIFFERENT COUNTIES.

BY SAMUEL LEWIS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.—FROM LLANEDARN TO Y VAENOR ISŴ.

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annexed, endowed with £800 royal bounty; net income, £86; patron, Earl of Lisburne; attached are about 200 acres of land scattered in other parishes. The church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and situated on a rock commanding a fine view of Maen Arthur wood, is an ancient edifice, consisting of a nave, divided by a screen to form a chancel; the length is about 50 feet and the breadth 15; the roof is supported by octagonal pillars, in one of which is a cavity for the purpose of a font. Here are two day schools, where 90 children are instructed at the expense of their parents; and five Sunday schools are attended by persons of both sexes, who are taught gratuitously.

YSTRAD, with ARGOED, a hamlet, in the parish of TREGARON, upper division of the hundred of PENARTH, county of CARDIGAN, SOUTH WALES; the population is included in the return for Argoed.

YSTRAD, with GARTH, a hamlet, in the parish of LLANDEWY-BREVI, upper division of the hundred of PENARTH, county of CARDIGAN, SOUTH WALES, 8 miles (N. E.) from Lampeter; the population is returned with the hamlet of Garth; as well as the amount of the commutation for tithes. It is situated on the right bank of the Teivy, and the old Roman road from Llanio to Ponnal passed through it, from which latter circumstance its name is supposed to be derived.

YSTRAD, a hamlet, in that part of the parish of LLANDINAG which is in the lower division of the hundred of CAYO, county of CARMARTHEN, SOUTH WALES, 2½ miles (S. W. by W.) from Llandovery; containing 178 inhabitants. It occupies part of the right bank of the Towy, and the road from Llandovery to Carmarthen passes through it. Near this road stands Llwyn Brân, the beautiful seat of Major Rice, situated within view of the Towy, and sheltered by luxuriant plantations behind. There is a ford across the river in this hamlet, the population of which is almost exclusively agricultural.

YSTRAD (MIDDLE), a hamlet, in the parish of YSTRAD-DYVODOG, hundred of MISKIN, county of GLAMORGAN, SOUTH WALES; containing 218 inhabitants.

YSTRAD-DYVODOG, otherwise YSTRAD-DYVODWG (YSTRAD-DYFODWG), a parish, divided into the two townships of Ystrad-yvodog and Rhigos, in the union of MERTHYR-TYDIL, hundred of MISKIN, county of GLAMORGAN, SOUTH WALES, 8 miles (S. W. by N.) from Llantrisant; containing 1363 inhabitants. The scenery in this neighbourhood is singularly wild and romantic; and the mountains, which are very lofty, frequently rise abruptly, and almost perpendicularly, from the level ground, and present an unbroken face to the summit, so as to have obtained the designation of the "Alps of Glamorgan." The tourist as he ascends is gradually more and more delighted, until

he reaches "Talcen-y-Byd," or the "forehead of the world," which is one of the most prominent features in the parish; but the roads are very indifferent, and frequently prevent tourists from penetrating into these secluded and romantic scenes. Throughout the valley flows the rapid stream Rhonddô, which, though of an indifferent appearance, and having only a small volume of water, affords good sport to the angler. The Dinas collieries are in the vicinity, whence a communication is formed by tram-roads with the Glamorganshire canal and the Taf Vale railway. The living is a perpetual curacy, endowed with £600 royal bounty, and £900 parliamentary grant; net income, £285; patron, Rev. J. B. Williams; impropriators, Dean and Chapter of Gloucester. The church, dedicated to St. Tyvotwg, is situated in a valley of the same name, nearly in the centre of the parish. There are two places of worship for Baptists. In the township of Ystrad-dyvodog is a day school, in which 16 children are instructed at the expense of their parents; also a Sunday school, consisting of about 80 males and females, gratuitously taught; these schools are held in a room built by the parishioners, in 1829, and occupied rent-free by a master, who conducts both. The schools in the township of Rhigos are noticed in the article on that place.

YSTRAD-DYVODOG HOME, a hamlet, in the parish of YSTRAD-DYVODOG, hundred of MISKIN, county of GLAMORGAN, SOUTH WALES; containing 212 inhabitants.

YSTRAD-GUNLAIS (YSTRAD-GYNLAIS), a parish, comprising the Upper and Lower divisions, in the union of NEATH, hundred of DEVYNOCK, county of BRECKNOCK, SOUTH WALES, 14 miles (S. E. by E.) from Swansea; and containing 2885 inhabitants. The name of this place, according to some authorities, is derived from the dedication of its church to St. Gunleuc, a prince of "Gle-wissig," who, by his residence here, gave his name to the small vale in which it is situated; but others more correctly state that the church is dedicated to St. Mary; and it has been thought that the proper appellation is Ystrad-Garlais, or Garwlais, signifying "the vale of the rough-sounding brook," and is derived from a stream so called, a little below the church, which separates this parish from that of Kily-behill, and also forms a boundary between the counties of Brecknock and Glamorgan. The parish, situated in the Vale of Tawe, is bounded on the south-east by the river of that name, and on the south-west by the brook Garwlais above noticed, and is intersected by the turnpike-road from Swansea to Brecknock. Its surface is adorned with several gentlemen's seats, the principal of which, Yniscedwin House, once the residence of the Aubreys, and now the property of R. D. Gough, Esq., by marriage of one of his ancestors with the heiress of that ancient family, is a handsome mansion, in a delightful part of the Vale of Tawe, environed by some richly-varied

scenery, and in the centre of a highly improvable and extensive domain: in the Upper division stands the old seat of Glynllŷch Isaf.

The entire district abounds with mineral wealth, and in the parish are valuable mines of iron-ore, stone-coal, and limestone, which combining with other local advantages, have led to the establishment of very large works at this place. The iron-works belonging to the Yniscedwin Company are considered as among the oldest of the kind now in operation in the kingdom; and the opinion of their antiquity has been confirmed by the discovery of an old pig of iron in a cinder bank in 1795, on which was the date 1612. These extensive works comprise two blast furnaces for smelting the ore, air furnaces and cupolas for converting the pig-iron into castings, with fineries for making the refined metal used by the tin-manufacturers. The furnaces are blown by a powerful machine, erected in 1828, from designs by Mr. Brunton, of London, and worked by a water-wheel of large diameter. The iron-ore and limestone used are procured in the parish; but the stone-coal being unfit for the purpose of smelting iron, a supply of another kind is obtained from mines in some of the adjoining parishes. The works, when in full operation, afford employment to five or six hundred men, exclusively of whom, about two hundred and sixty are constantly engaged in the collieries of the parish; the stone-coal and culm raised in these is chiefly used in drying malt and burning lime. Great quantities of limestone are quarried at the Cribarth rock, and are purchased by farmers and others along the line of the Swansea canal, to burn for manure and other purposes. On the limestone to the north of this rock is found an abundance of *tripoli*, or *lapis cariosus*, of a very pure quality, much of which is collected and sent by the canal to Swansea, and thence shipped to different parts of England, to be used in the burnishing of metals. The *Swansea canal*, a branch of which reaches to the Yniscedwin works, terminates at a place called *Hŷs Neuadd*, in this parish, two miles above the church; and to it converge numerous tram-roads from the works, for the conveyance of their produce. A tram-road was laid down in 1825, by John Christie, Esq., of London, extending from the Gwain Clawdd, over the forest of Devynock, to Rhŷd-y-Briw, in the Vale of Usk, by means of which a communication is established between this mineral district and the heart of Brecknockshire; and a branch, six miles in length, from Penwyll to the head of the Swansea canal, forming a junction with the main road, has also been constructed. The annual value of the rateable property in the parish has been returned at £4363, of which £2954 is for the Lower, and £1409 for the Upper, division.

The *LITING* is a rectory, rated in the king's books at £9. 10. 7½, and in the patronage of the proprietor of the Yniscedwin estate: the tithes have been com-

mutated for a rent-charge of £372: the church is a small neat fabric, consisting simply of a nave and chancel, with a belfry at the west end. The chapel of Coelbren, situated in the Upper division of the parish, and formerly a chapel of ease to the mother church, has been endowed, and the living is now a perpetual curacy, in the patronage of the rector, with a net income of £45: the structure was rebuilt in 1799, almost entirely at the expense of Walter Price, Esq., of Glynllŷch, who owns five of the seven tenements of which the hamlet of Coelbren consists. There are places of worship for Baptists and Independents; that for the latter, a remarkably neat building at Tŷ'n-y-Coed, in the Upper division, erected by subscription, in 1831; that for the Baptists, situated at Nant-y-Pin. In the Lower division is a day school, in which 40 children are educated at the cost of their parents; also a Sunday school, supported by voluntary contributions, and consisting of 87 males and females, who attend the Established Church; and another, appertaining to Calvinistic Methodists, and containing about 100. In the Upper division is a day school, where 40 children are taught at their parents' expense, in a neat house erected almost exclusively at the cost of Howell Gwyn, Esq.; and two Sunday schools afford gratuitous instruction to about 70 males and females. Morgan Aubrey, of Yniscedwin, Esq., bequeathed a rent-charge of £4. 5., payable out of a farm called Twyn-y-Ceillig, in the parish of Devynock, for the benefit of the poor.

A Roman road, now called the *Sarn Leon*, or *Sarn Helen*, is still visible in the parish, passing along a high ridge of rock which separates it from Ystrad-velleu, and from Cadoxton in the county of Glamorgan, and hence declining southwards towards the station *Nidum* (Neath). On this ridge, between Coelbren and Cerrn-hir-Vynydd, was formerly an erect stone, supposed to have been a Roman military, with an inscription, of which only the letters *13RC* were in later times legible, but it has been removed or destroyed. Upon the hills towards Llywel, and bordering on Carmarthenshire, are several *carne-ddau*, and the remains of three ancient British encampments, but nothing has been recorded of their original formation. Near the chapel of Coelbren is an enclosure, which, from its quadrilateral form, and its contiguity to the *Sarn Helen*, is thought to be Roman; and at a short distance from this place is a kind of natural wall, formed by the side of the limestone rocks, in which is a small cavern, styled *Cradock's Church*, or *Hermitage*, which, according to Mr. Jones, the historian of Brecknockshire, is erroneously so called, as he supposes it to have been the cell in which Gunleus died in the arms of his son Cattwg, who gave his name to this cavern, as his father had in like manner given his to the vale.

About three-quarters of a mile to the east of Coelbren chapel is the most remarkable waterfall in this

part of the county, designated '*Sydd yr hên Rhyd*. It is formed by the Llŷch, or Llŷchog, a small mountain stream, which, for a considerable distance from its source, flows over a rocky bed, in a part of its course entirely destitute of vegetation, and without any feature of beauty, except where in some places it expands into a river; it afterwards crosses the road from Ystrad-veillyt to Coelbren, when it is lost in a deep-wooded glen, on its emerging from which the whole river, in one unbroken sheet, descends from a perpendicular height of more than a hundred feet; being interrupted in its fall by a projecting ledge of rocks, about ten or twelve feet below the summit, it dashes into foam, and, after its descent for the remaining ninety feet, without further impediment, it disappears in the thick foliage of the woods which clothe its precipitous banks, and pursues a winding course to the river Tawe. Though this fall is of much greater height than that of Eiro Hepstê, the water in its descent has less grandeur and breadth, when both rivers are equally full. At an inn, known by the sign of the "Lamb and Flag," in this parish, the outlawed criminal *Hayfield*, who, under the assumed name of the Hon. Colonel Hope, had seduced into marriage the beautiful and artless Mary of Buttermere, in Cumberlând, was arrested; he was committed by the magistrates to the gaol at Brecknock, and thence conveyed to Carlisle, where he was tried and executed.

YSTRAD-MEURIC, county of CARDIGAN, SOUTH WALES. — See *YSPTYTY-YSTRAD-MEURIC*.

YSTRAD-OWEN or **YSTRAD-OWAIN**, a parish, in the union of BRIDGEND and COWBRIDGE, hundred of COWBRIDGE, county of GLAMORGAN, SOUTH WALES, 3 miles (N.E.) from Cowbridge; containing 196 inhabitants. Ithel, surnamed Dû, or "the Black," Prince of Glamorgan in the tenth century, occasionally resided here; and the place is distinguished in the historical annals of the principality as the scene of a desperate battle between the invading Saxons and the ancient Britons under Conan ab Seisyllt, in the year 1031, when that chieftain and all his sons were slain. It derives its name from Owain ab Collwyn, who lived here in a palace, of which the site is marked by a large tumulus near the church, now covered with a thriving plantation. The parish comprises a moderate extent of good arable and grazing land, and a portion of common, affording pasturage for sheep and young cattle: the surrounding scenery is pleasingly diversified, and enlivened with some interesting features. Ash Hall is a handsome modernized mansion, situated on an eminence above the church, commanding a fine view of the whole Vale of Glamorgan, from the house to the sea, with the town of Cowbridge in the foreground, and the high lands of Somersetshire in the distance.

The living is a perpetual curacy, endowed with £1200 royal bounty, and £200 parliamentary grant;

net income, £41; patrons and appropriators, **Chapter of Llandaf**. The church, dedicated to **St. Owain**, is a very small ancient edifice, not remarkable for any architectural details. On a tablet in an inscription recording that Sir Lionel Jenkins, Knt., presented to each of the churches of Ystrad-Owen and Llanblethian a tenor bell; and that Evan, his brother, gave a house and thirteen acres of land, yielding £22. 4. per annum, to repair the bells, directing the surplus to be appropriated in apprenticing children, and relieving aged labourers not able to work, in both parishes, in equal shares. Sir Lionel also bequeathed a fund for clothing the last description of persons, which amounts to £90 every fourth year for this place.

On a hill to the south of the church are some inconsiderable remains of the ancient castle of Tal-y-Vaen, or Talavan, one of the twelve fortresses erected by the followers of Fitz-Hamon, by whom this portion of the conquered territory was granted to Sir Richard de Seward, in whose family it continued for many generations; it formed part of the dowry of the widow of Hugh le Despencer, when affianced to Guy de Brien, and was subsequently conveyed by marriage to the Dukes of Lancaster, and is still included within the duchy. In a field near the village were two large monumental stones, rudely ornamented, which were supposed to have been placed at the head of the graves of Owain ab Ithel and his consort, and thence called the King and Queen stones; but they have been removed for some time. Near the churchyard, in a field adjoining it on the west, is a very large tumulus, of which not even any traditionary account has been preserved. An annual assembly of the bards was held here for many years, under the auspices of the ancient family of Hensol, and the custom was kept up till the year 1721, when the male line of that house became extinct; a house in which the meetings are said to have taken place is still remaining.

YSTRAD-VELLTHEY (**YSTRAD-FELLT-AU**), a parish, composed of the Lower and Upper divisions, in the union of NEATH, hundred of DEWYNOC, county of BRECKNOCK, SOUTH WALES, 15 miles (S.W.) from Brecknock; containing 682 inhabitants, of whom 414 are in the Lower, and 268 in the Upper, division. This parish is beautifully situated in the sequestered Vale of the Mellitê, from which it takes its name, and on the turnpike-road from Brecknock, through Pont Neath Vaughan, to Neath and Swansea. It is chiefly remarkable for the romantic beauty of its scenery, and the numerous and highly interesting objects of natural grandeur which it comprehends within its comparatively narrow limits. On the confines of the county of Glamorgan, but within this parish, is the small but picturesque village of *Pont Neath Vaughan*, situated on the Lesser Neath river, over which there is a neat stone bridge, connecting the shires of Brecknock