

## CHAPTER 25.

*Pont y Pool.—Japan Manufacture.—Anecdotes of the Hanbury Family.—Pont y Pool Park and House.—Trevethin Church.*

THE town of Pont y Pool is singularly placed on the edge of a steep cliff, overhanging the Avon Lwyd, and on the slope of a declivity under impending hills, partly bare, and partly mantled with wood. The line of the canal is seen winding above the town; a rapid torrent, descending from a lake at the foot of the Mynydd Maen, flows under the canal, and rushing impetuously along the outskirts of the town, precipitates itself into the Avon Lwyd, which rolls in an abyss beneath.

The appellation of Pont y Pool is modern, supposed to be derived from a bridge thrown over a large pool, which supplies water for a forge, but is a corruption of Pont ap Howell or Howell's bridge\*.

Pont y Pool is a large straggling place, containing 250 houses, and 1500 souls †. Several neat habitations, and numerous shops, present an appearance of thriving prosperity, notwithstanding the dusky aspect of the town, occasioned by the adjacent forges. The inhabitants derive great support from the iron works and collieries, and have been recently benefited by the trade of the canal. The place is the principal mart for the natives of the mountainous district,

\* Before the existence of the present town, the place contained very few houses, and was called, from the church, Trevethin. Near the bridge over the Avon Lwyd, was a neat house belonging to Davydd ap Howell, the ancestor of the late Mr. Edmund Davies, who was agent to the Hanbury family. From

the vicinity of his residence the bridge was called Pont Davydd ap Howell, abbreviated by the Welsh to Pont-ap-Howell, and corrupted to Pont-a-pool and Pont y Pool. From Mr. Evans.

† From the Rev. J. Williams the vicar.

district, and the weekly market is not the least considerable, and the cheapest in Monmouthshire. It was a pleasing amusement to mix in these crowded meetings, to observe the frank and simple manners of the hardy mountaineers, and endeavour, in asking the price of their provisions, to extort a *Saxon* word from this *British* progeny. The women were mostly wrapped in long cloth cloaks of a dark blue or brown colour; all of them wore mob caps neatly plaited over the forehead and ears, and tied above the chin; several had also round felt hats like those worn by the men, or large chip hats covered with black filk, and fastened under the chin. This head-dress gives an arch and lively air to the younger part of the sex, and is not unbecoming.

The town principally owes its foundation and increase to the iron works established by the family of Hanbury; it is likewise remarkable for the japan manufacture, known by the name of Pont y Pool ware. In the reign of Charles the second, Thomas Allgood, a native of Northamptonshire, came to Pont y Pool, and being a man of a projecting genius, made various experiments to extract copperas and oil from coal, and finally invented the method of lackering iron plates with a brilliant varnish, in the same manner as the Japanese lackered wood; which was afterwards distinguished by the name of Pont y Pool ware. Dying, however, before it was brought to perfection, his son Edward, who inherited his father's genius as well as his father's secrets, pursued the discovery with increasing spirit, made considerable improvements, and finally established a manufactory of japan ware, which was long unrivalled. This manufactory is still carried on by his grandson William, but on a less extensive scale; its decrease is principally owing to the rise of similar establishments in other places, and particularly at Usk, under a branch of the family\*.

Edward Allgood was the principal agent of major Hanbury, and assisted him in directing and improving the iron works, particularly the wire manufactory, which was deficient in the method of polishing to that established at Woburn  
in

\* In 1761, Edward Allgood, with one of his brothers, grandsons of the first inventor, removed to Usk, where they established a japan manufactory, which I have already mentioned. This Edward is

still living at Usk, in the 87th year of his age, and to him, through the medium of Mr. Morgan Davis, an ingenious young man employed in the manufactory, I am indebted for this account of the Allgood family.

in Bedfordshire. For the purpose of discovering the secret, Edward Allgood repaired to Woburn, in the character of a beggar, and acting the part of a buffoon, gradually obtained access to the workshops, and was permitted to inspect the various processes, by which means he acquired the art of making the leys, the principal ingredient for giving a more brilliant polish to the iron wire, which was the only desideratum in the Pont y Pool works.

The situation of Pont y Pool, near a region rich in mineral treasures, in the midst of forges and collieries, and at the head of the canal, render it peculiarly commodious for the establishment of iron manufactories; and perhaps another generation may see a new Birmingham start up in the wilds of Monmouthshire.

Pont y Pool is in the manor of Lantarnam, and the town house was erected in 1730 by Mrs. Bray, joint lady of the manor with her sister Miss Morgan, which is commemorated by an inscription in English and Welsh on the front.

The family of Hanbury, to whom the town owes its consequence and celebrity, have long resided at Pont y Pool park, in the vicinity; their ancestors were formerly seated at Hanbury hall in Worcestershire, from which place they derived their name. According to the red book of the bishopric of Worcester, Roger de Hanbury was born there in 1125, and his descendant Galfridus, resided there in the middle of the sixteenth century. About the year 1500 the possessor disinherited his brothers, and left the seat, and part of the estate to a natural daughter. Richard, the eldest, settled in London, and is distinguished as one of the Goldsmiths' company, (for so the bankers were called) in the reign of Henry the seventh. His eldest son, Capel, purchased an estate at Pont y Pool, and was the first founder of the iron works. The earliest conveyance deeds are dated 1565, and a regular account of the sale of iron commences in 1588. Neither he, or any of his immediate descendants, were permanently seated at Pont y Pool, but possessed landed property in the parish of Kidderminster, in the county of Worcester, where they seem to have resided. They occasionally repaired to Pont y Pool, for the purpose of inspecting the iron works; and the initial letters of John and Richard, the son and grandson

of Capel, together with the family arms \*, are carved on the pulpit of the church, with the date of 1637.

Capel, the son of Richard, died in 1704, and was buried in the chancel of Kidderminster church, under a flat sepulchral stone, with this memorial:

“ Here was laid the body of Capel Hanbury, esq. May it rest as he lived and  
“ died in peace, in the 79th year of his age, 14th January 1704.

“ With length of days he met his fate prepar'd,

“ No murmurs, not a sigh or groan was heard;

“ That peace that dwelt within his honest breast,

“ Has smooth'd his passage to eternal rest.”

His eldest son and heir John, usually known by the name of major Hanbury, was born in 1664; after receiving a liberal education, and making a considerable proficiency in classical literature, he chose the profession of the law. He did not however long pursue his studies in this line: he said one day, to Mr. Jones of Lanarth, “ I read Coke upon Littleton, as far as Tenant in Dower; but on the  
“ suggestion of a friend, that I should gain more advantage from the iron works  
“ of Pont y Pool, than from the profits of the bar, I laid aside Tenant in Dower,  
“ and turned my attention to mines and forges.”

In 1701 he married Albina Selwyn, daughter of John Selwyn, esq. of Matfon, in the county of Gloucester, with whom he obtained a considerable fortune. With this addition to his own property, he determined still farther to improve the iron works at Pont y Pool, near which place he built a house, and fixed his residence.

His skill and indefatigable application were crowned with considerable success; he increased the produce of the iron works, made many improvements in the machinery, invented the method of rolling iron plates by means of cylinders, and introduced the art of tinning into England.

By the interest of his wife's family, he was chosen, in 1701, member for the city of Gloucester, which he continued to represent in the three succeeding parliaments. His wife dying without issue, he espoused, in 1703, Bridget Ayscough, eldest daughter of Sir Edward Ayscough, knight, in the county of Lin-

coln;

\* Or, a bend, engrailed, vert, cotised sable.



*Harding sc*

MAJOR HANBURY

*From an original Picture in the Possession of Capel H. Leigh Esq.*

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coln; she was in high favour with the dukes of Marlborough\*, and by this connection he acquired the protection of the duke, who honoured him with particular marks of confidence and esteem.

On the accession of George the first, he was chosen, on the independent interest, member for the county of Monmouth, which he continued to represent until his death. Although no speaker, he distinguished himself as a man of business, and was appointed chairman to several committees. During the reign of Queen Anne, and the early part of the reign of George the first, he uniformly voted with the whigs; but on the schism, which divided that party, he joined the body hostile to government, opposed the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, and his name appears among the members who voted against the excise.

In 1720 he obtained a considerable acquisition of property; Mr. Williams, of Caerleon, who fled from his country for killing Mr. Morgan, of Penros, in a rencontre †, having received, on his return to England, great marks of attention and friendship from Major Hanbury, stood godfather to his son Charles, and dying unmarried, bequeathed to him the bulk of his fortune, which exceeded £.70,000, under the condition of purchasing estates, the proprietor of which should assume the name and arms of Williams. In memory of his benefactor, Major Hanbury erected a monument in Westminster abbey, with an elegant inscription ‡, expressive of his regard and gratitude.

Soon after the failure of the South Sea scheme, when many of the directors were dismissed, the integrity of his character, and his talents for business, recommended him to the proprietors, and he was appointed one of the new directors. About the same period, he had the honour of being one of the executors of his patron the duke of Marlborough's will. In gratitude for his faithful discharge

of

\* Among the family papers at Pont y Pool, are a few anecdotes of the dukes, written by Mrs. Hanbury.

† See p. 96.

‡ Carolus Williams  
de Caerleon

In Agro Monmouth Arm.

Obit 29no. Die Augti. Ann. Dom. 1720.

Ætatis suæ LXXXVII.

Vir fuit verè Christianus

Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ Fautor Eximius;  
Patriæ Amans & Publicæ libertatis Vindex,  
Erga Pauperes, præcipuè  
Caerleonenses suos.  
Piè Liberalis;  
In Amicos splendide munificus,  
In illum præsertim,  
Qui Hoc grato Animo Monumentum  
Posuit  
I. H.

of that delicate office, the duchess of Marlborough presented him with an elegant service of plate, and his wife with a valuable set of jewels.

Before his death he purchased the estate of Coldbrook, and settled it on his son Charles, godson of Mr. Williams, afterwards well known under the name of sir Charles Hanbury Williams. He died highly respected, beloved, and lamented, in 1734, in the 70th year of his age. He left five sons; John, who died in 1736 without issue; Capel, the ancestor of the present possessor of Pont y Pool park; Charles; George, who succeeded to the estate of Coldbrook after the death of Charles; and Thomas, who died in 1778 without issue.

The widow of major Hanbury resided at Pont y Pool until her death in 1741, when Capel inherited the estate. On the death of sir Charles, without issue male, Capel had, by his father's will, the option of the Coldbrook estate, on the condition of relinquishing that of Pont y Pool to his brother George. A compromise, however, took place; Capel retained Pont y Pool, with £.23,000, the remainder of the legacy left by Mr. Williams, which had not been expended in the purchase of lands, and George succeeded to Coldbrook.

Capel, after representing the borough of Leominster, was several times knight of the shire for the county of Monmouth, and declined the offer of a peerage.

Capel dying in 1765, was succeeded by his son John, who likewise represented the county of Monmouth, until the time of his decease in 1784; when the independent interest which had hitherto supported the family, was, by the minority of his son, diverted into another channel.

His eldest son John Capel, dying in 1795, the seat of Pont y Pool park, and the estate, were inherited by Capel Hanbury, esq. the present proprietor, who has since assumed the name of Leigh, in consequence of the will of the late lord Leigh\*, devising his property to his next of kin male, bearing the name and arms of Leigh.

I was much indebted to Mr. Leigh, to whom I was introduced by my friend Mr. Greene, for a kind reception at his hospitable mansion of Pont y Pool park.

During

\* His grandmother, the honourable Jane Trasy, eldest daughter of Thomas Charles, fifth lord Viscount Tracy, was descended from Thomas, the first lord Leigh, by the female line of his first marriage.

During my continuance in this pleasing abode, I was permitted to inspect the interesting correspondence and papers of fir Charles Hanbury Williams, which highly gratified my curiosity, and have enabled me to throw a considerable light on the anecdotes of his life\*.

These papers comprise great part of his official correspondence during his embassies at Dresden, Berlin, and Petersburg; and many interesting letters on the politics of the times, from some of his most confidential friends, particularly Mr. Fox, lord Chesterfield, Mr. Rigby, and the late earl of Orford. Among these papers is a collection of his poems in manuscript, particularly the original copy of *Ifabella, or the Morning*.

The mansion was partly built by major Hanbury towards the latter end of the last century, and partly by his son Capel; it is a comfortable house, but will soon be much improved and beautified by the present proprietor, in conformity with a judicious plan which is now carrying into execution.

In the possession of Mr. Leigh are several family pictures, not uninteresting. Three portraits of major Hanbury, at different periods; the first when he was a young man, in a coat of mail, with his head bare; the second middle aged; the third, in a red cap, in the latter part of his life, from which the engraving annexed to this chapter is taken. The first of these portraits exhibits a handsome and frank countenance, and the last displays even in old age an appearance of great spirit and vivacity. The head of his second wife, Bridget Ayscough; a half length of his son Capel; two portraits of the honourable Mrs. Hanbury, eldest daughter of lord viscount Tracy, and wife of Capel; a three quarters, in crayons, of the late John Hanbury, esq.; another of his wife Mrs. Hanbury, now Mrs. Stoughton, and their three infant sons. Two portraits of fir Charles Hanbury Williams, one in full dress with the ribband and star of the order of the Bath, the second in a plainer habit, reposing his cheek on one hand, and holding in the other his poem of *Ifabella, or the Morning*; this picture is well painted, and larger than that at Coldbrook. I noticed also a fine whole length portrait of fir John Hanbury, knight, of Kilmarsh, in Northamptonshire,

\* Chapter 29.



who was descended from a collateral branch of the Hanburys, seated at Benehall\*, in the county of Worcester; he died in 1634, aged 65. A head of an old man in a blue night cap, though indifferently painted, must not be passed over in silence; it is the portrait of Mr. Williams of Caerleon, the friend of major Hanbury, and the great benefactor of the family.

Over the fire-place in the dining room is a painting which represents Sarah duchess of Marlborough, in a mourning habit, sitting, with her daughter Anne, afterwards countess of Sunderland, clothed in white, and holding a basket of fruit; Blenheim house appears in the back ground; the beautiful countenance of the duchess, and the elegant form of the young lady, are eminently conspicuous. In the same apartment are several others, not undeserving of notice; John duke of Marlborough, sitting, with a truncheon in his hand; Frederick the second, king of Prussia, a present from that monarch to sir Charles Hanbury Williams, when ambassador at Berlin; the earl of Strafford, who was beheaded in the reign of Charles the first, by Vandyke; Sir Robert Walpole, a copy from Vanloo; and Thomas Winnington, esq. of Stanford court, Worcesterhire, the friend of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, a great supporter of the whig interest, and an active partisan of Sir Robert Walpole. He filled the offices of lord of the admiralty and treasury; was treasurer of the navy and paymaster of the forces, and died in 1747.

A connoisseur will not fail to admire two charming pictures by Morillo, a present from sir Robert Walpole to Capel Hanbury; they represent two groupes of boys, with the nature and simplicity which characterise the works of that pleasing master. Among several curious paintings, which Mrs. Leigh brought from Gnoll Castle in the county of Glamorgan, the seat of her late husband sir Robert Humphrey Mackworth, bart. is an Esculapius, writing, said to be by Vandyke, and a portrait on wood, of a handsome man in black armour, his head uncovered, with a scarf tied round his left arm, inscribed with a motto *n'oblie point*; a battle and a siege are represented in the back ground. It bears the date of 1575, ætatis 35, and an inscription, one word of which is illegible "pour \*\*\*\*\*

et

\* Heralds' office, pedigree of the Hanburys of Benehall and Kilmarsh.

et ma patrie." It appears to be the portrait of Robert Dudley earl of Leicester, the weak and haughty favourite of queen Elifabeth.

The mansion is singularly situated at the extremity of the grounds, a small distance from the town, which (though seated on the perpendicular cliff, rising from the opposite bank of the Avon) is so judiciously concealed by plantations of oak, beech, and poplars, that scarcely a single house is discerned. The view is rendered formal by a kitchen garden, which occupies the interval between the front of the house and the torrent, and by an artificial terrace, in the style of the last age, not consonant to the genius of the place. But these specimens of false taste will soon be removed; a lawn of verdure will gradually slope from the house to the torrent, and harmonise with the native beauties of the scenery.

The grounds are pleasing, wild, and diversified; a narrow lawn stretches from the house to the turnpike road at Pont y Moel; the western boundary is the Avon Lwyd, which here rushes with its usual rapidity; the left bank is flat, the right a perpendicular cliff, beyond which towers the bold and bare summit of the Mynydd Maen. On the opposite side of the vale the grounds rise into abrupt eminences, clothed with hanging groves, and crowned with tufts of wood. The edge of this beautiful valley is skirted by a succession of ancient oaks, beeches, and Spanish chefnuts, which sweep the lawn with their pendent and wide spreading branches. The upper part of the park is composed of gentle undulations swelling one above the other, and separated by small dingles; not a vestige of art appears, no clumps, no avenues, no formal outlines; the whole seems moulded and planted by the hand of nature.

In company with Mr. and Mrs. Leigh, I had a pleasant ride through the park and grounds to the folly, a summer house built by the late Mr. Hanbury, near the southern extremity of the chain of hills, which stretch from Pont y Pool park, and terminate in the Bloreng. From this eminence, the wild and fertile parts of Monmouthshire, the hills and dales, plains and mountains, are beautifully combined, and enriched with woodlands, which overspread the country beneath and around to a considerable extent. No traveller should quit Monmouthshire without enjoying this singular and almost boundless prospect.

The parish church of Pont y Pool, called Trevethin, is situated on an eminence at the distance of a mile from the town; a neat gravel walk ascends to it through the plantations of Pont y Pool park, which was begun at the expence of Mrs. Evans, daughter of the late curate, and is now maintained by subscription under her superintendence. The church consists of a square tower of stone, with white-washed battlements, a nave, a north aisle, and a chancel; it appears to be an ancient structure; the nave being separated from the aisle, by four low circular arches reposing on massive columns scarcely five feet in height. The chancel is divided from the church by a gothic arch, over which is inscribed "John Hanbury, Charles Rogers, mercer, churchwarden, 1730." On the pulpit I noticed an inscription in large old characters. "1637, God save the king, C. R. 13. J. H. A. H. R. H. A. H." which are the initial letters of John and Richard Hanbury and of their respective wives, with the arms of the family rudely carved.

At the eastern extremity of the northern aisle is a small chapel adjoining to the chancel, the cemetery of the Hanbury family. At the upper end is a sepulchral monument erected by his widow, to the memory of major Hanbury, and surmounted by his bust in marble well executed.

" HERE LIES THE BODY OF JOHN HANBURY, ESQ.

" OF PONT POOLE IN THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH,

" WHO BY HIS GREAT UNDERSTANDING AND HUMANITY

" MADE THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLACE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RICH AND HAPPY;

" AND THEY WILL TELL THEIR CHILDREN TO LATEST POSTERITY

" THAT HE WAS A WISE AND HONEST MAN.

" HE WAS CHOSEN IN EIGHT PARLIAMENTS,

" AND WAS KNIGHT OF THE SHIRE FOR THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH AT

" HIS DECEASE.

" HE WAS APPOINTED BY THE GREAT DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

" ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS TO HIS LAST WILL.

" HE MARRIED BRIDGET, DAUGHTER OF SIR EDWARD AYSCOUGH, OF

" KELSEY, IN THE COUNTY OF LINCOLN,

" BY WHOM HE LEFT FIVE SONS, JOHN, CAPEL, CHARLES, GEORGE,

" AND THOMAS.

" HE DIED THE 14 DAY OF JUNE 1734 IN THE 70 YEAR OF HIS AGE."

In

TREVEETHIN CHURCH.

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In the church yard is an epitaph in verse which deserves notice, because it was composed by fir Charles Hanbury Williams, in commemoration of a faithful agent :

“ TO THE MEMORY OF  
“ MR. THOMAS COOKE,  
“ AGENT OF THE IRON-WORKS  
“ TO JOHN HANBURY, ESQ.  
“ OF PONT Y POOL,  
“ WHO DIED AUGUST THE 1<sup>ST</sup>  
“ 1739: AGED 66 YEARS.”

“ WITH MOST RELIGIOUS TRUTH, IT MAY BE SAID  
“ BENEATH THIS STONE AN HONEST MAN LIES DEAD;  
“ VICE HE ABHORR'D, IN VIRTUE'S PATH HE TROD;  
“ JUST TO HIS MASTER, HUMBLE TO HIS GOD.  
“ USEFUL HE LIV'D, AND VOID OF ALL OFFENCE;  
“ BY NATURE SENSIBLE, WELL BRED BY SENSE;  
“ HIS MASTER'S INTEREST WAS HIS CONSTANT END;  
“ (THE FAITHFULL'ST SERVANT, AND THE TRUEST FRIEND)  
“ FOR HIM HIS HEART AND HAND WERE ALWAYS JOIN'D,  
“ AND LOVE WITH DUTY STRICTLY WAS COMBIN'D.  
  
“ TOGETHER THRO' THIS VALE OF LIFE THEY PASS'D,  
“ AND IN THIS CHURCH TOGETHER SLEEP AT LAST;  
“ FOR WHEN THE MASTER'S FATAL HOUR WAS COME,  
“ THE SERVANT SIGH'D AND FOLLOW'D TO THE TOMB.  
“ AND WHEN AT THE LAST DAY HE SHALL APPEAR,  
“ THUS SHALL HIS SAVIOUR SPEAK AND SCATTER FEAR:  
“ WELL DONE THOU FAITHFUL SERVANT, GOOD AND JUST,  
“ RECEIVE THY WELL DESERV'D REWARD OF TRUST; .  
“ COME WHERE NO TIME CAN HAPPINESS DESTROY,  
“ INTO THE FULNESS OF THY MASTER'S JOY.”

A proof of the rapid progress made by the English language in this place was imparted to me by the Rev. Mr. Williams, vicar of the parish. Since his first arrival at Pont y Pool, the service was performed once in English, and three times in Welsh, and the greater part of the congregation scarcely understood English; at present the two languages are alternately used, and the English tongue predominates.

PEDIGREE OF THE HANBURY FAMILY.

