

A Glimpse of North Wales 1880-1930

As seen through the sketches by Beatrice and Annie Francis Cummings

Introduction

Beatrice was born in 1856 and died in 1935 aged 79.

Annie Francis was born in 1861 and died in 1925 aged 64.

They were both born in Stockport, Cheshire and both died in Flintshire, Wales.

Their father was the Rev Charles James Cummings (1821-1873), from Heavitree in Devon and later rector of St Mary's Parish Church in Cheadle from 1847 until his death. Their mother was Mary King (1824-1909) from West Kirby, Liverpool before her marriage.

Their eldest sister, Mary Genevieve, was born in 1852 in Heavitree. They had four other siblings – Agnes, Sidney, Magdalene and Wilfred.

A fair amount of information is known about Mary Genevieve as her grand-daughter inherited family documentation and a number of small sketch albums which had belonged to her grandmother and to her two great-aunts – Beatrice and Annie Francis. The grand-daughter – Betty Bowker Dwight – died in 2015 and the albums were passed on to The Friends of Rondebosch Common in Cape Town.¹

Betty had lived in Cape Town all her life and had, over many years, painstakingly recorded the wild flowers on this historically and botanically protected Commonage. Her book of painted illustrations serves as the standard guide for the monthly fauna and flora of this remnant of the Cape Floristic Region – which is by far the smallest of the world's six 'floral kingdoms'.

The story of Mary Genevieve was made particularly interesting as she came to South Africa in 1911 and stayed for five years painting wild flowers (three albums of which have been lodged with the Compton Herbarium at Kirstenbosch Gardens), scenes of Cape Town and small sketches recording the ships in the convoy escorting the 'Durham Castle' on her return to England during World War I.

Mary Genevieve married Henry Cope-Arnold from the Isle of Wight. They settled at Wolvey in Warwickshire. Her albums contain sketches/paintings illustrating the late 1800 scenery of the Isle of Wight, the Wolvey Estate and its surroundings and other areas such as Torquay.

Not only are there a great many especially 'good' paintings but, as a record of Victorian Britain, there are many illustrations which clearly have considerable heritage value.

¹ The Friends of Rondebosch Common is a non-profit organisation and is dependent on volunteer administration. All membership fees and donor contributions go towards the conservation, maintenance, restoration and promotion of the Common. The notation and photographic recording of every painting in the albums has been undertaken voluntarily as is this attempt to enlarge on the pictorial record of Beatrice and Annie's journeys through North Wales during the late 1800's and early 1900's as contained in their albums – thirty of them. These albums together with the digital copies of their contents have been donated to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

Other than the areas mentioned above, the subject matter of these albums ranges from the south of England, Shropshire, Cheshire, Yorkshire and North Wales including Anglesey. Beatrice recorded a very short trip to Holland and Belgium in 1888.

Beatrice and Annie Francis lived in Wonford Hill in Heavitree, Exeter until 1882 after which they moved to 6 Kings Buildings in Chester, where they lived until 1909. Following this, they moved to the village of Caerwys in Flintshire, North Wales where they lived, firstly, in the house 'Bodlondeb' before moving (in 1913) to their final home – 'Tan LLan' close to St Michael's Church.²

The content of the thirty albums is not only a pictorial record of where they travelled and what they saw but also serves as a very intimate reflection of what they valued and their appreciation of the landscape and the life around them. Basically, we know virtually nothing more about them other than what can be gleaned from the contents of the albums together with the following three references that have been found - relating to their artistic talents.³

Firstly, the report on the annual conversazione of the Chester Society of Natural Sciences, Literature and Art held in the Grosvenor Museum in 1899 reads as follows :⁴

'An interesting feature of the conversazione was a special exhibition by the newly constituted art section (the Guild of Arts and Crafts) of oil and water colour paintings by artists residing in the district.

*The exhibition was opened by the Duke of Westminster... The artists whose work was selected by the Committee were ... Miss Beatrice Cummings, Miss Annie Francis Cummings ... Miss Louise Rayner. ... In one of the galleries there were also celebrated works of art from the National Gallery, South Kensington Museum etc, including the Turner collection of paintings. ...*⁵

*The Duke of Westminster ... made the following presentations ... Grants from the Kingsley Memorial Prize Fund ; to Miss Payne, Miss A Payne and Miss Cummings, for their joint work in the revision of the Flora of the City and neighbourhood ... to Miss Payne and Miss A Payne for their list of the plants of Porth-y-Post, Anglesey.'*⁶

² The precise date of moving from Exeter to Chester is not known. From the dates of their sketches, it would appear to have been late in 1882.

³ It is important to note that these albums are the sole record of the sisters that have fortuitously been found and it is inconceivable that there are not more albums, let alone diaries, that have survived elsewhere.

⁴ The Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales 25 October 1899. Beatrice would have been forty-three at the time, and Annie thirty-eight.

⁵ Including the two sisters, a total of 24 artists work had been selected. Of particular note was the inclusion of Louise Rayner – recognised as one of the best Victorian watercolour portrayers of streetscapes.

⁶ This presumably referred to Beatrice and was meaningful given the fact that :

- Her sister (Mary Genevieve) produced albums of indigenous flower paintings during a visit to South Africa in 1911-16 – these now being in the custodianship of the Compton Herbarium at the Kirstenbosch Gardens in Cape Town.
- Apart from many flower paintings scattered throughout her many albums, Beatrice produced an album of pencil sketches recording the wildflowers in the vicinity of Caerwys in Flintshire where she later lived.
- Porth y Post was visited a number of times by both Beatrice and Annie Francis and these visits could well have arisen from their association with the Paynes.
- The interest and talent of flower painting carried through to lodge with Mary Genevieve's granddaughter and Beatrice's grand-niece - Betty Bowker Dwight – where this whole story began.

Secondly, the following report was found in the Cheshire Observer of 1906.⁷

'An 'Observer' representative was favoured with a private view of a small exhibition of water-colour drawings by the Misses Beatrice and Annie Cummings, which has been opened in Messrs Phillipson and Golder's, Eastgate Row. Perhaps no branch of art presents so attractive a study as water colour painting, the delicate beauty of which, when seen at its best, often outrivals the more ambitious work in oil. In this choice collection the Misses Cummings reveal the beauty of water colour art in many varied examples and it is extremely pleasing to find that the charms of our local scenery have been so skilfully reproduced by Chester artists.'

'There are upwards of seventy drawings, all of which are from the brushes of the ladies ... Refinement of style is the prevailing characteristic, and there is a wealth of variety in the subjects treated which bear evidence of diversity of talent in a remarkable degree. Whether in the portrayal of broad landscapes, seascapes, rugged mountain scenery, secluded country spots, moorland, woodland or flowers, the artworks represent a technical skill and fidelity to nature that commands admiration.'

Thirdly, an internet search resulted in the finding of an undated painting attributed to Beatrice and sold for £90 – but with no information as to its sale date. The albums contain sketches by both Beatrice and Annie Francis (hereafter referred simply as 'Annie') of the subject – Rhos Neigr (Rhosneigr) in Anglesey. The painting and the sketches are shown below.



The date of Beatrice's sketch (on the right) is Oct 1 1900, and the one by Annie is Sept 1900. It is noteworthy that Beatrice's painting seems to be based on Annie's (rather than her own) perspective.

The first record of them having sketched the same subject – Babbacombe Bay in Torquay – was in 1876. Beatrice was twenty-years old and Annie five years' younger. This was the first of many occasions when the sisters would set off together on a sketching trip – sometimes in England and sometimes in north Wales.

The intention of this account is to record only Beatrice and Annie's travels in North Wales – alone and together. It is intended that further accounts will cover their other travels and observations together with those of Mary Genevieve. Particular attention will be given to the great many recordings of Chester and its surroundings.

In the absence of any other information, it has been assumed that the sisters were both well-educated and well-read and also that they had the financial means and time to undertake their many excursions. Coming from an ecclesiastical family (their father, their mother's father, their sister's husband – all being priests) it is not surprising that so many of their sketches were of both churches and rectories.

⁷ Cheshire Observer 10 March 1906. Beatrice would have been fifty and Annie forty-five.

What does not have to be assumed is the high level of their artistic talents and the wide-ranging nature of their interests.

In 1883 (the forty-sixth year of Queen Victoria's reign), Beatrice made her first sketch-recorded visit to Wales. This would be followed by her visit with Annie two years later.

While the Womens' Suffrage movement had already formally established itself some ten years before, the social status of women was still very much suppressed and it took another forty-five years (and an agreement by the movement not to distract attention away from the WWI war effort) before limited rights to vote at national level were granted. It was only in 1928 that the right to vote was granted to all women.

The lack of recognition given to women artists and the discrimination against their ability to exhibit their work, led to the formation of the Society of Female Artists in 1855 - later re-named the Society of Women Artists. It was only in 1922 that female artists were admitted to the Royal Academy.

On the one hand, the albums represent what could be termed a life of privilege, but this should not detract from the serious effort the two sisters would put into their artwork where a number of paintings would frequently be recorded on the same day when on their painting trips. Following their travels, there is clear evidence of their adventurous spirit.

Still, there is simply no record of what they did when not travelling and painting.

Apart from their close association with the church, the sisters could possibly have played an active role given the number of times their sketches are recorded of and from the rectory of churches across both England and Wales. Beatrice also recorded the Anglican Church Congress at Rhyl in 1891, paid visits to army training camps prior to WWI and sketched a retirement home for the clergy in 1932.

A particularly interesting aspect of their lives, is that spent in Caerwys from 1909 until, at least, 1922 (Annie) and 1932 - Beatrice. Tan Llan was (and still is) within easy sketching distance of St Michael's Church. Apart from numerous sketches of both their homes (Bodlondeb and Tan Llan), their gardens and their surroundings, Beatrice recorded (in pencil) the wildflowers of the area.⁸

Annie seems to remain even more of an enigma than Beatrice, Apart from her recordings of landscapes and historic buildings, she produced an album consisting entirely of sundials found across both England and Wales.

Given the number of travel guides and books that would have long been available together with the promotion of rail travel, they would have been well aware of where they wanted to travel to and what to see.⁹

They would, also, almost certainly have been informed and inspired by the subject matter of some of Britain's finest artists such as Richard Wilson through to Turner, Girtin, the Varley brothers, Cox and Cotman who had (since the mid-1700's to the mid-1800's) recorded the scenery of North Wales.

⁸ Caerwys may be a village in size, but its status is that of a town. It was granted a charter by Edward I in 1290 and is the smallest formal Market Town in Britain. It is also known for having been the venue of the two eisteddfodau held in 1523 and 1568 when the rules and principles were laid down for all those following. (Wikipedia)

⁹ Thomas Pennant's 'Tours in Wales' – first published between 1778 and 1783, but republished in 1810 – would have been a possible source of their reading and their exposure to the illustrations by Moses Griffiths.

They would most likely have been reasonably knowledgeable about the broad history of Wales in the context of that relating to Britain in general and would almost certainly have read up more detail about the places they were to visit. In following their travels (as recorded by their sketches) an attempt is made to briefly touch on the historic role played by each place the sisters would visit.¹⁰

Given that a fair amount of information can be gleaned relating to their interests and affections (portrayals of family members, pets, landscapes and buildings, farming and fishing activities, boating, animals, birds and flowers) – their personalities and personal lives remain elusive. We have no knowledge of their relationships to others beyond their immediate family. With no diaries at hand, we can but only wonder what they were like as clearly strong-minded, single women living (and clearly taking a great interest in the wealth of subject matter in Britain and Wales) at a time of great general transformation.

However, there is one instance that perhaps serves as an indicator of the ‘person behind the painter’. The following entry is found in one of Annie’s albums next to a rough sketch of a station platform.

Aged nineteen, this is what she wrote : ‘*Teignmouth Station 27 blooming minutes to wait. Sketch, in fact study, we might in fact almost say work by AFC the rising genius – 18 March 1884.*’

The illustrations, below, are a further tiny sample of their work which, in the thirty small albums, contains over 950 sketches/paintings. Because the subject matter varies from album to album and the places and even the dates are often mixed up, it is difficult to extract a coherent account of all their work. This, therefore, is the reason why this account limits itself to North Wales which depicts the bulk of the illustrations.



The above were painted by Beatrice : The same scene in late autumn and in winter. It was possibly nearby Caerwys – given other paintings of the area around the same date. These were dated the 14th of November and the 6th December 1909.

¹⁰ An ‘historic background’ is inserted at the outset; Its intention being to serve as a contextual framework in support of references made to the historic events and people associated with the places visited.

A brief outline of certain aspects of the social history of North Wales from the sixteenth century onwards is attached as an annexure.

It must be stressed that both the place-related historic background and the annexure cannot be seen in any way other than the amateurish putting together of information gleaned from the various sources cited.

An apology is due both for this cursory and insufficiently-informed attempt to give an historic context to their visits and for any lapses in referencing. An unashamed reliance has been placed on the work by Jan Morris and David Ross.

As an example of the size of the albums (and hence of the sketches), the matchbox is half its actual size.

Some of the albums were larger than this one and others considerably smaller.

This glimpse of North Wales is structured as follows :

Historic Background

- Part one, p 1 : Beatrice's first recorded visit in 1883 – Gwynedd ('north')
- Part two, p 9 : First visit together 1885 – south-western part of Snowdonia
- Part three, p 15 : 1886 visit – south-western part of Snowdonia
- Part four, p 24 : Anglesey 1887, 1897, 1899, 1900 and 1901
- Part five, p 34 : Holy Island 1889 – 1898
- Part six, p 42 : Llyn Peninsula and southwards – 1896 - 1899
- Part seven, p 50 : Conwy, Denbigshire, Flintshire and Wrexham 1887-1924
- Part eight, p 76 : Caerwys 1909-1932
- Annexure, p 89 : Social History – an overview from the 16th century onwards



The notes listed below relate to the outline of the sketching trips which follow hereafter.

- The notation 'B' or 'A' is indicated for each sketch : Beatrice or Annie Francis.
- Annie Francis is referred to throughout as 'Annie'
- The term 'sketch' is used throughout even though many of them are small paintings.
- Place names are as indicated on the sketches but, in the text, they have been changed to their current usage - eg Conway changed to Conwy.
- In setting out the illustrative record of their North Wales visits, an attempt has been made to group the sketches into the broad locations visited. This being primarily aimed at interest groups wishing to gather local heritage information but also to avoid repetition of background material. However, because of their repeated visits, many of the dates are out of sequence – hence, for example, referring to Beatrice's 1883 visit, paintings by her done in 1884 and 1888 are included as well as ones by Annie in 1891.



An undated photograph of the Cummings siblings

Back Row (L to R) : Beatrice, Annie, Mary Genevieve, Agnes

Front Row (L to R) : Sidney, Magdalene, Wilfred

North Wales : A Brief Historic Background ¹¹

As Jan Morris writes, *‘Wales is enormously old, old in geology, old in humanity, but its history is unusually explicit. The detritus of the ages is all around ...’*¹²

The oldest known remains of tool-making people found in Wales date back a quarter of a million years ago to ancestors of the Neanderthal people living in the Pleistocene Ice Age. These remains and associated stone tools were discovered in a cave in the Elwy Valley near St Asaph.¹³

Traces of the thousands of years of occupation by the Late Stone Age Neanderthals have been found right up to the about 9-8 000 BC and coincided with the retreat of the last cold climatic fluctuation. This melting of the ice cap and the resulting rise in sea levels gave rise to the current landform of Wales including Anglesey becoming an island separated from the mainland by the Menai Strait.

With the warmer climate and vegetative change, animal and bird life increased and the area became inhabited by the more skilled Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) peoples. With their finer tool and weapon-making techniques they were able to practice a certain amount of control over their environment.

The Mesolithic period lasted from about 8 500 to about 4 500 BC when the spread of peoples from continental Europe into England and Wales, was accompanied by the introduction of farming – the growing of grain and the rearing of farm animals. This Neolithic period (Late Stone Age) was marked by a growth in the population, a more settled lifestyle, specialised tool-making, the building of stone burial chambers and the erection of stone circles and standing stones.

The discovery of metal objects dating back to around 2 500 BC marked the beginning of the use of copper and tin to produce bronze which gave rise to not only the more advanced manufacture of tools but also weaponry. Communities reliant on subsistence living now evolved into a society which, to a large extent, was driven by warfare.

The building of Stonehenge (and the other massive stone structures in England) straddled the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods, as did the stone circles in Wales.¹⁴

Other than the physical remains of what was built or manufactured and what can (and has been) interpolated from their physical remains and the context in which they were discovered, there is no evidence of who these pre-historic people were.

Arrival of the Celts *‘The first historically identified settlers were Celts from the European continent ...who are thought to have moved into the peninsula during the third and fourth centuries before Christ.’* While the only physical evidence of their presence during this time lies in the hill forts

¹¹ The sketches left behind by Beatrice and Annie Cummings (as they travelled through North Wales and recorded the landscapes and man-made features) represent what they saw at the time. Consequently, this historic background is an attempt to trace the history of the area solely in terms of its tangible manifestations. However, underlying and inextricably tied to the history of these tangible objects (natural and man-made) are those historic (and generally intangible) aspects of the culture of the people of North Wales – such as language, religion and politics. This ‘intangible history’ (from the sixteenth century onwards) is briefly outlined as an Annexure.

¹² Jan Morris ‘A Matter of Wales’ pp 47, 2,3

¹³ S Aldhouse-Green, R Peterson & E A Walker ‘Neanderthals in Wales, 2012

¹⁴ All of the above has been derived from David Ross ‘Wales – History of a nation’ pp 19-25

they constructed and the iron weapons and tools that have been found, descriptions of them were contained in the writings of the Romans who invaded Britain in AD 43.¹⁵

First- Fourth Centuries Long before the end of the first century, the Romans had overwhelmed the Celtic tribes of North Wales and, having crossed the Menai Strait, had destroyed the centre of Celtic resistance and identity (particularly that of the druids) on Anglesey.¹⁶

The next three centuries of Roman occupation was a time of continual warring with the local tribes but, unlike in England, where the Celtic culture had been subsumed by the Romans followed by the Saxons and other invading European tribes, it managed to survive in Wales – particularly in the north and in the south-west where their ancient language evolved into Welsh (Cymraeg). Together with their language, their customs and traditions, the obsession with myths and legends (such as that surrounding King Arthur) formed what Morris refers to as the ‘Celticness’ of the people that was to be honoured for centuries to come¹⁷

When the Romans finally withdrew towards the end of the fourth century, their presence was mostly marked by the network of roads, forts and town walls together with the first seeds of Christianity and the number of Latin names and phrases left behind.¹⁸

Sixth-eighth Centuries With the absence of the Romans, the door was left open for the invasion of what became known as England by the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes and the Franks and so began the centuries-long conflict between the Welsh and the peoples of England resulting in the building of Offa’s Dyke in the eighth century. The Dyke served not only to define the boundary between the peoples of Wales and those of England, but also contributed to the sense of a unified identity felt within Wales – despite internal power struggles.¹⁹

Christianity had become strongly established in Wales over the sixth to eighth centuries and the influence and power of the Welsh Church during this period was evidenced by the building of important monasteries such as those at Bangor and Llanelwy - which later became known as St Asaph.²⁰

Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Centuries. Anglesey and the northern coastline were subject to frequent Viking raids during the ninth and tenth centuries, but the greater influence on Wales was felt by the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066 and William I was soon in control of most of England. In order to have control against the Welsh, he established a number of lordships (the ‘Marcher’ Lords) along the entire length of the border. Castles were built and the beginnings of market towns established around them. While, other than repeated conflicts with the Normans, North Wales remained largely unaffected by their presence in terms of a tangible legacy, the rest of Wales was marked by the number of castles, cathedrals and abbeys constructed.²¹

Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries²² North Wales, during the twelfth century, experienced a time of power struggles not only with its neighbouring territories (Norman/English) but also between

¹⁵ Morris pp 2,3 and 50

¹⁶ Ibid, pp 50, 51

¹⁷ Ibid p 3

¹⁸ Ibid pp 54-57

¹⁹ Ibid pp 3, 60

²⁰ David Ross ‘Wales – history of a nation’ p60

²¹ Ibid., pp 74-82

²² Ibid pp 88-104

Welsh family members. The thirteenth century was, nevertheless, seen as a general time of progress and relative stability for all of Wales which was primarily due to the role played by the two Llywelyns whose leadership would span almost a century.

The long sought-after ideal within Wales of a single united principality was given hope, firstly, by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth ('Llywelyn the Great') who became the sole ruler of Gwynedd in 1194 and was still in power of an expanded territory when he died in 1240. His grandson – Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, referred to as 'Llywelyn the Last' - proceeded to consolidate his rule over most of Wales and was given the recognition of 'Prince of Wales' by the English Crown under Henry III.

With Henry's death in 1272, his son - Edward I - became King of England. A serious dispute arose between Llywelyn and the new king which culminated in Edward invading Wales with an enormous army. He not only took control of Gwynedd (including Anglesey) and Ceridigion, but proceeded to build or rebuild castles at Aberystwyth, Rhuddlan, Flint, Criccieth and Builth.

A futile revolt by the Welsh against the English administration of the area resulted in Llywelyn being killed and Wales was now firmly under English control. Edward set about constructing further castles at Harlech, Conwy, Caernarfon and Beaumaris on Anglesey.

This 'ring' of fortifications served to ensure the impregnability of Gwynedd and signified the end of the striving for independence. Edward's son was made Prince of Wales and later became King of England as Edward II.

Fourteenth century Almost a third of the Wales population was wiped out by the bubonic plague (the Black Death) in the mid-fourteenth century and a state of general poverty followed afterwards. Throughout this period a sense of resentment prevailed amongst the populace regarding their plight as subjects to the English on their own land.²³

Fifteenth century In her almost poetic way, Morris writes, '*Once more, once only, the Welsh rose to arms in a last concerted convulsion of liberty – during the years of Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion, at the start of the fifteenth century, which was thereafter to be remembered as the allegorical climax of their history, the one moment when all the old prides, resentments, despairs and defiances found a brief satisfaction.*

*It failed, the glory receded into myth and longing, and in the course of the next 500 years the English established a hold over almost every aspect of Welsh life.*²⁴

Owain Glendŵr's (Owen Glendower to the English) rebellion took place at the time of the Renaissance which, while expressing itself throughout Europe by the wonder and beauty of the buildings and artworks of the period, had no such physical expression in Wales. It nevertheless could be said that it found its expression in this leader's mind and in the ideals he fought for. He'd been educated at the Inns of Court in London and his unfulfilled wish, other than that of a unified and independent nation, was the establishment of universities in Wales – one in the south and one in the north.²⁵

For a brief period of fifteen years – the reality of Welsh nationhood had seemed possible.

²³ Ross p107

²⁴ Morris p70

²⁵ Ross p110

Sixteenth century²⁶ Henry VIII – passed the Act of Union in the mid-sixteenth century which formally tied Wales to England, imposed English as the official language of Wales and effectively put an end to the idea of a Welsh Nation.

In his breaking away from Rome, Henry VIII outlawed the Roman Catholic Church. In the name of the Protestant Reformation, the monasteries of Wales were abolished and the Catholic adherents persecuted. By 1538 the abbeys, priories and friaries of Wales had ceased to exist

Seventeenth Century²⁷

Civil war broke out between Charles I and Parliament in 1642 and, while this was essentially an English matter, it had a marked effect on Wales. Not only were the Welsh a source of fighting men, but because of its many castles and the vulnerability of its coastline to attack from the west, Wales became an important strategic territory which neither side could allow the other to control.

While the first fighting on Welsh territory began in the north in 1643, the Parliamentary forces (under Cromwell) had taken control of South Wales by 1645. Occupying the various castles in the north, the Royalist forces held out against the Parliamentary forces until the surrender of, firstly Denbigh Castle, then Conwy and finally Harlech Castle in 1647. A year later, the Parliamentary forces had finally taken control of North Wales including Anglesey.

Because King Charles had earlier established the royal mint in Aberystwyth Castle (providing silver money), Cromwell had it virtually destroyed.

Eighteenth century²⁸

Except for minor local roads, no major road construction had taken place in Wales since the Roman roads built in the fifth century. But now, from 1750 onwards, the establishment of turnpike trusts gave rise to the construction of toll roads. Improved transport connections between towns (particularly those with harbours) went hand-in-hand with the rapid introduction of wheeled stagecoaches. This (together with the construction of canals) was, in turn, coupled with the growth of industrialisation, mining and commerce.

Because of its natural resources, Wales was an important participant in the growth of industrialization that emanated from England. Although mostly concentrated in the south because of its iron and coal reserves, the mining and smelting of copper in Anglesey was resuscitated after centuries of virtual dormancy. Also in North Wales, lead mining and particularly the quarrying of slate became important means of employment and a source of revenue.

Improved transportation led to a rapid increase in the number of travellers to North Wales. The landscape scenery, the historic castles, the coastline and the mystique of the area and its people gave rise to the beginning of what became a major tourist industry.

Thomas Pennant's *Tours in Wales* (1778) and *Journey to Snowdon* (1783) followed his travels by horse-back accompanied by Moses Griffiths. The publications included engravings of the drawings and watercolour sketches by Griffiths and other artists. These served to bring Wales to the attention

²⁶ Ibid., pp120-137,

²⁷ Ross pp142-153, Williams pp144-159

²⁸ Ross pp154-171

not only of the general public but, significantly, to that of the watercolourists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Of great relevance to the story of the Cummings sisters, is that North Wales gave birth to one of the first major British artists to concentrate on landscape painting. Richard Wilson was born in 1714 some ten miles from Cader Idris at the southern-most end of the Snowdonia Mountain Range. His paintings were amongst those collected by Dr Thomas Monro whose ‘academy’ in London served an important role in the part that many of the best known landscape artists were to play in what is acknowledged as the ‘Golden Age’ of British watercolour painting. As young ‘pupils’, Turner, Girtin, the Varley brothers and Cotman amongst others were given the opportunity of copying and learning from Monro’s collection which included Wilson’s paintings of Welsh scenery dating from the 1760’s.²⁹

Attracted by its scenic beauty (but also, in response to the changed social climate associated with the French Revolution which put a stop to their visits to the Continent), the above artists together with others such as David Cox made numerous sketching trips to North Wales between 1798 and 1805—both independently and sometimes together.³⁰

Nineteenth century³¹ Whereas the beginnings of industrialisation took place during the eighteenth century as evidenced in certain fields of mining, in the construction of roads and improved methods of farming, the nineteenth century became synonymous with large-scale industrialisation. As with other industrialising nations, the nature and pace of change was unprecedented.

Coal mining for domestic purposes gave way to its usage for iron smelting and facilitating the burgeoning development of the steam engine which revolutionized the movement of raw material, manufactured goods and people both on land and on water. The first ever record of a steam-driven locomotive running on rail took place in 1804 between two small villages in South Wales and it was only a matter of decades before a fully functional railway system was in place. The construction of canals, aqueducts and bridges (many of which had great aesthetic appeal) were all part of establishing connectivity throughout Wales.

Although the concentration of industry, population and urban growth lay in the South, North Wales experienced a rapid rate of population and urban growth particularly in association with the coal mining industry around Flint and Denbigh and the iron industry around Wrexham, Hawarden and Mold. The demand for slate roofing that arose (from the huge amount of housing development across the country, in the rest of Britain and in Europe) resulted in the revival of the slate industry around Caernarfon and Meirionydd. By 1880, the industry was supporting around 45 000 people.

²⁹ Wilton, Andrew , *British Watercolours 1750-1850* Phaidon Press Ltd, Oxford, 1977

³⁰ *It is almost certain that the Cummings sisters would have been acquainted with and influenced by the general work of these artists. The particular scenic subject matter of North Wales, depicted by these artists, has been reproduced by countless artists over the years and so it is understandable that much of the scenery captured by the two sisters at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries is the same or similar to that dating back to the turn of the 18th/19th centuries. In some cases, the connection has great historic value in depicting both change and ‘no change’ – as it does in comparing all their work with the present-day situation.*

³¹ Ross pp 173-202