



# FACTsheet 6

## Penmaenmawr's longest poem

We seem to have found a contender for Milton's epic "Paradise Lost", but this time the topic is Penmaenmawr.

In 1862 a property called Frondeg, at the Penmaenan end of the town, was managed as a lodging house for visitors by a local joiner, J. Jones. He welcomed a group of visitors in the June, who had come to Penmaenmawr for a few days to explore the scenery.

One of the group was so inspired by the landscape, they penned a massive 1300-word poem, describing the group's activities during their visit. The poem's author was so delighted by what they had seen and experienced, they wanted the poem to be published to encourage other people to visit the area.

This period was the aftermath of the popular 19th-century Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Felicia Hemans and Shelley. Perhaps the author fancied themselves as the 'next great thing' and wanted to pick up where they had left off! What is certain is that this is the longest poem about Penmaenmawr we've ever come across - we imagine the author must have spent most of their holiday writing it!



So sit back with a cup of tea or three, and enjoy taking in the sights and sounds of Penmaenmawr over 150 years ago, through the observations and words of this unknown poet...



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Here are we – closing a right pleasant week,  
In this, our comfortable stranger-home –  
Five summer Pilgrims from a northern shire,  
From an old town of steel, and steam and smoke,  
The far-farmed capital of Cutlerdom;  
Health-seekers in fresh air and exercise.

A cheerful, happy group, we roam or rest;  
Three sisters in the hey-day of young life  
With earth's best hopes, and heaven's high ends  
before them;  
Their brother, bold in manhood's earliest stage;  
Earnest, untiring, fearless, venturous, kind –  
And ever ready, map in hand, to lead  
His glad companions over hill and dale,  
Tracking the rarely trodden paths; and proud  
To test the official chorographic lines,  
Nor less to prove his skill in reading them.

And sharer of the common hopes and joy,  
The Poet-kinsman of the happy tribe,  
Whose pleasure is, while chronicling their deeds,  
To welcome others to enjoy the same.

Hail, then, to thee, thrice-honour'd  
Penmaenmawr!  
Honour'd by tourist, draughtsman, poet, - each  
In his own way; or can my transient praise  
Enhance thy ancient fame: yet would I not  
Forego this chance of paying as I may,  
A grateful tribute to the charming spot,  
Between thy mighty, mountain-mass sublime,  
And the grand, Irish sea, whose billowy waves  
Foam at my feet – where I have made my nest.

Health here distributes blessings with both  
hands –  
The fresh sea-breeze, and bracing mountain air;  
Pure water gushing from a thousand springs;  
Sweet mountain meat, eggs, butter, milk and  
bread;  
With exercise and temperance bringing sleep –  
Such sleep as they alone can ever bring:  
These cheer the mental toiler's holiday;  
Refresh enjoyments' jaded appetite;

Perchance allay the heart's too fervent heat,  
And kindly bless stout labour's resting hand.

Frondeg! The stranger, come from whence he  
may –  
If seeking recreation, peace or health,  
Or curious Cymric character to scan,  
May find a home in thy plain-cottage street,  
Or in thy pleasant villas scatter'd round –  
A home to suit him surely, if he wants  
Aught but the noise, the crowd, the cost, the  
show,  
The stimulus of fashion. If he seek  
For their own interest, and his own delight,  
What or of near or distant lures the eye –  
The sea, with its for-ever changing beauty;  
Its constant tidal motion – pleasing ever  
To inland folks like us; then its wild rage  
And billoughy grandeur when the wind is high:  
Its rippling smile, or glassy slumber when  
There is no breeze upon it – with that play  
Of strange, prismatic tints at noon! Oh then,  
What heart but must expand with chasten'd joy!

Look yonder, how the mighty Ormeshead lifts  
His bulk out of the ocean; at his feet,  
Llandudno stretching its long line of town.

Look yonder how dark Mona's Druid isle,  
Shuts in the distant view. And oh! last night,  
To see, o'er Puffin Island the sun set,

And what a shower of refluent glory gilt  
The interjacent space was to receive  
A sense of beauty to the mind for ever!

But if, perchance, the reader of these lines  
Is some wise stranger of the gentle sex.  
Who fain would trace untreacherous sands  
With her young charge, and give their joyance  
scope;  
Or with her sisters, or her friends, the hour  
Of quiet converse in an evening walk,  
Or seek in silence to indulge alone,  
Such thoughts as seaside solitude suggests,  
Here will be found a fit and favouring strand.



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But most of all will this sweet spot reward,  
The mountain climber, whether bent to scale  
The slippery front, precipitous and dreary,  
Of mighty Penmaenmawr – gain its rough crest –  
Explore its quarried heights, and from that stand  
Or still more daring climb its topmost peak –  
Thence view the varied scene: or, if content  
With greensward path and steep, but gradual  
slope,  
He fain would, from surrounding hills and vales,  
Catch the grand spirit of this wond-rous land,  
The ramble, long or short, will him reward.

Up here the maiden, with her alpenstock,  
May climb, if booted well; and hence explore  
The shady beauty of deep bowery lanes,  
With rose and woodbine gorgeously array'd;  
The damp adventure of the turfy bog,  
With its white tufts of cotton-grass o'erspread;  
The mountain streamlet leaping o'er the stones,  
And the quaint stile reared by the rude grey  
walls,  
May please the fancy for a while: anon,  
Snug nestled in full many a curious nook  
The true Welsh cottage to the eye affords  
A study, such as we had half believed,  
Existed nowhere in these railway times,  
Save in the artist's folio of old prints,  
Or, in the Poet's song of years gone by.

And while on these snug homes no gaze – and  
catch  
Glimpse of piled cairn, or distant cirque of stones  
By superstition raised in olden times,  
It is a matter of delightful thoughts –  
Yea, should excite deep gratitude of heart –  
That in these seeming solitudes of space,  
God, and his Christ, the Saviour of mankind,  
Are not forgotten by the mountaineer.

Where'er I've spent some summer weeks in  
Wales,  
Or whether in the village or the town,  
I've seen, or fancied the blest Sabbath day,  
Was more becomingly observed, at lease,  
Than in some other places, where the light  
Of knowledge shone as clear; Yea, I have mark'd  
How the plain chapel, or the rustic church,  
Met me in all my rambles 'mid the hills –  
And, on the morning of the holy day  
What numbers wended to the house of prayer.

How I do love to seek out these old churches,  
Hid in the glens, or perch'd upon the mountains,  
Not seldom in some strange romantic spot,  
Perchance, far from the scatter'd cottages,  
And bearing curious names of local saints,  
Or some most curious history, pointing back,  
To Cambrian annals of long bygone times.

Sometimes they naked stand, as rude and plain,  
As if they had once tumbled from the rock,  
Like the great boulders round them; but the bell  
On the low apex of the gable poised,  
Attests their sacred use: but most trees,  
At least the solemn yew, how ancient oft!

Surround and beautify these hoary piles.  
And most I love their rustic burial grounds –  
O'ergrown most likely with tall herbage rank,  
Half hiding the old grey stone lichen'd tombs,  
Or grave-stones of blue slate that ne'er decay.

I read the names – and think how those who  
once  
Bore them amongst their fellows breathing  
round,  
Like all my fellow mortals, turn'd to dust –  
Once lived, and lov'd and laugh'd, and wept, and  
died!





# Penmaenmawr's longest poem

And now, my unknown friend, who hast thus far  
In this my rhythmic tour, so lightly framed,  
Climb'd with me these green mountain heights,  
and paus'd

Here to admire, and there to meditate,  
Which way shall we descend? Lo, yonder looms  
O'er Conway's rising flood, the sombre towers  
Of that famed castle which disclaims a peer  
In picturesque effect on Cambrian soil;  
Shall we walk thither? Or turn round and seek  
The path to Llanfairfechan? Or stil on,  
Pursue the bowery road, till, lo, we stand,  
Romantic Aber! By thy waterfall?

Or, it brave will, and still untiring feet –  
Such seem my dear companions to possess! –  
Be thine – see yonder on the distant hill,  
Stands Penrhyn Castle – aim we then at that;  
And pause hard by to notice the fair church,  
Its matchless avenue of ancient yews,  
Amid the paradise of Llandegai;  
And Bangor, though unseen, is close at hand.

Here halt and rest thee; for of food and rest  
Thou wilt have need, after so long a walk;  
Then, if some loved ones are awaiting thee,  
Or anxious with thee, ere day close to reach  
Thy present home, and mine – endear'd Frondeg!

Hark to the railway whistle – heed the sign –  
And presently – oh, wond'rous power of steam!  
The iron road will leave thee at the spot,  
Where, with a memory fill'd with pictures new,  
And so I trust – a glad and thankful heart, –  
The mighty shadow of old Penmaenmawr,  
Scarce darkening at its close the longest day,  
Will warn thee sweet to rest.

