

Iolo Morganwg letter of 1818

'Interesting Autograph Letter - from an article in the 'Weekly Mail', 21st May 1892

Below we give a facsimile of a portion, and the whole text, of a letter written by the famous 'Iolo Morganwg' in 1818.....The letter was supplied to us by Mr Daniel Owen J.P., of Ash Hall, to whom it was given by Mr. N Bird, ironmonger, Cowbridge. Mr Bird and his late father have between them continuously occupied the same shop since 1795, the tenant previously to that date having been Iolo Morganwg, and the letter was found by Mr Bird among old papers undoubtedly left there by Iolo.

'Flimston March 13th 1818

To their Worships the Bench of Magistrates at their Petty Sessions in the Town of Cowbridge

Gentlemen – Alice John the bearer hereof has been for nearly 8 months afflicted with a disorder in her eyes which renders her unable to support herself. She has been for the greatest part of the time under the attendance of Dr William Nicholls of Cowbridge, who by the accounts which this unfortunate young woman gives me has acted towards her with his well-known and far-famed benevolence but it became necessary for her to apply for parochial relief. She some years ago was at service with Ann Evan of Goodwell in this parish of Flemingston or Flemston, and the nature of her agreement was, as she says, as follows. She came to Ann Evan about the beginning of Nov. 1811 or 1812 she cannot remember which but she remembers that she considered herself as turned of sixteen years of age and is now in her 22nd year. Her first agreement with Ann Evan was for a month on trial and having given sufficient satisfaction she engaged to serve it until within a fortnight of Old May in the following year when some misunderstanding taking place she quitted the service and left Ann Evan a fortnight as already observed before the time was up of the second year that it appears that she served as a covenant servant in the parish from Nov. 1812 (as I take it) until Old May Day 1813 and from thence until about the first day of May (new till) 1814 when as already said she went away the whole time without any interruption about 18 calendar months. She is a native of Llantrissant where her parents are parochially settled. She returned to her father's house and afterwards worked with Mr Vaughan at Lanelay chiefly on the Farm for weekly wages was paid every Saturday night. With Mr Vaughan she thus continued to work for the greater part of the time excepting such times as weather would not permit her to work on the farm and for the last 8 months of disablement occasioned by the complaint in her eyes – She in May 1816 agreed by the year with Morgan Morgan of bran Wenith Parish of Llansannor, but served only something less than 3 months of her time for his masters Landlord distrained on and sold all the live and dead stock for his rent so that she was obliged to return to her fathers house in Llantrissant and afterwards worked as often as weather permitted with Mr Vaughan as before, on his farm at Lanelay until her eyes became so bad as to disable her, being obliged to apply for relief. She went to Mr Rickards of Llantrissant who examined her and from the account which she gave of herself and of her time and of the nature of her employments he concluded that she was settled in this parish of Flimston by service as above represented with Ann Evan at Goodwell She was of course brought here by an order of Mr Rickards by a person employed by the Parish to conduct her who brought her to the house of John Hooper who is overseer of the Poor where she was refused to be taken in or any other relief, but was treated with abusive language and sent to John Spencer who it seems does the Parish business respecting Paupers He gave her victuals for that evening and a part of the next day (last Wednesday) He did not lodge her in his house but found a lodging for her in the Village and yesterday gave her two shillings wherewith to support herself until next Tuesday but for her supper yesterday her breakfast to-day, and her bed last night she has been charged one shilling, so that she has only one shilling to support herself until Tuesday next which will not more than pay for her lodging. She intends waiting upon

your Worships at the Petty Sessions where if I well understand matters either John Hooper (or his infernal cat's paw for oppressing the poor – John Spencer) intends to be also.

I have endeavoured to give as correct a statement of the poor young woman's case as I possibly could from the words of her own mouth. I cannot help adding as an opinion of my own that I never saw or heard of such cruelties practised towards the Poor as I have known for the last year and a half or two years : in this infernalised parish of Flemston. I have obtained advice such as I am informed is necessary and intend to move the next Court of Quarter Sessions for such an enquiry into the conduct of this Parish as may be thought proper, the Parishes are almost everywhere by their oppression driving the Poor into Madness and I will venture to say that this is the greatest if not the only cause of a too general prejudice against the Government which by the ignorant poor is supposed to countenance those oppressions : than which nothing can be more untrue : how many orders for relieving Poor persons have been made within the last year given by the Magistrates in this parish and not obeyed but treated by the officers with open and glaring contempt. What I now assert I am able to prove should I be called upon to do so. Be pleased gentlemen to pardon me for detaining your attention to what I thus assert.

I am, Gentlemen

Your Worships Most Humble Servant

Edward Williams

Trinnton March 13th 1818

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Gent^{ly}

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