

Travel Writing Activity

Teachers' Guidance Notes

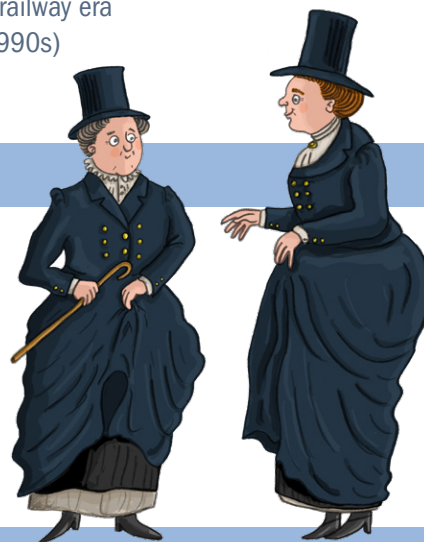
Learning Objectives

- To explore the Dee Valley through the eyes of different travellers in the past
- To learn about the Dee Valley through different time periods using a variety of sources
- To develop investigation, enquiry and creative writing skills

Resources

Map, image, transport and travel writing sources for:

- The 18th century, before Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal
- Early 19th century, canal era
- Late 19th century, railway era
- Post war (1945 -1990s)
- Present day



Activity Instructions

Learners take on the role of a traveller from one of the time periods and use the resource pack to inspire them. Using this information, learners will write a creative writing piece as the traveller from that time period. This could be a diary entry, letter home or blog piece.

Starter Activity Ideas:

Investigate the resource packs and answer the following questions to help shape your writing piece:



- How would you have travelled to the Dee Valley?
- What would you have seen? Was the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal there?
- Where would you have visited?
- What would you have done?
- How would you have felt?
- What are the positives and negatives of travelling at this time?
- Research more about what life would be like in a chosen time period

Brief for Learners:

- Pick one of the time periods for inspiration for your writing and imagine you are a traveller in the Dee Valley.
- Pick a type of creative writing piece. This could be a diary entry, letter home or blog piece.
- Write a creative writing piece from the point of view of the traveller, using your research and activity sources to help shape the piece.



Further Activity Ideas:

Write from a different perspective or time period.



George Borrow was a well-known traveller and writer who toured Wales in 1854 and liked to talk to local people he met along the way. Imagine you are a visitor from your chosen time period and chat with other travellers and local people about their experiences of the Dee Valley. Who do you meet? What are your conversations? How do your experiences differ?

18th Century Sources

Before Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal ①

Image: John Warwick Smith -View in the Vale of Llangollen coming from Chirk to Llangollen, 1792



Transport: Horse and trap (George Stubbs, 1787)



Map: [Blaeu Atlas Maior 1662-5](#)

www.





18th Century Sources

Before Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal ②

Traveller quotes

1802

“Few rides excel the ride from Llangollen to Corwen – the picturesque views of the Dee are justly allowed to be equal, if not superior to any river in Britain”

John Broster Chester

August 7th 1789

“Light airy Clouds - purple mountains -lilac and silver rocks - hum of Bees -rush of Waters...Melody of Haymakers”

Ladies of Llangollen journals

1802

“Soon after we regained the high road, we saw the immense aqueduct which is building over the Vale of Llangollen from the Ellesmere canal, when compleat it will be a very noble work, at present it is in a very unfinished state...”

Mary Anne Eade, Tour through North Wales

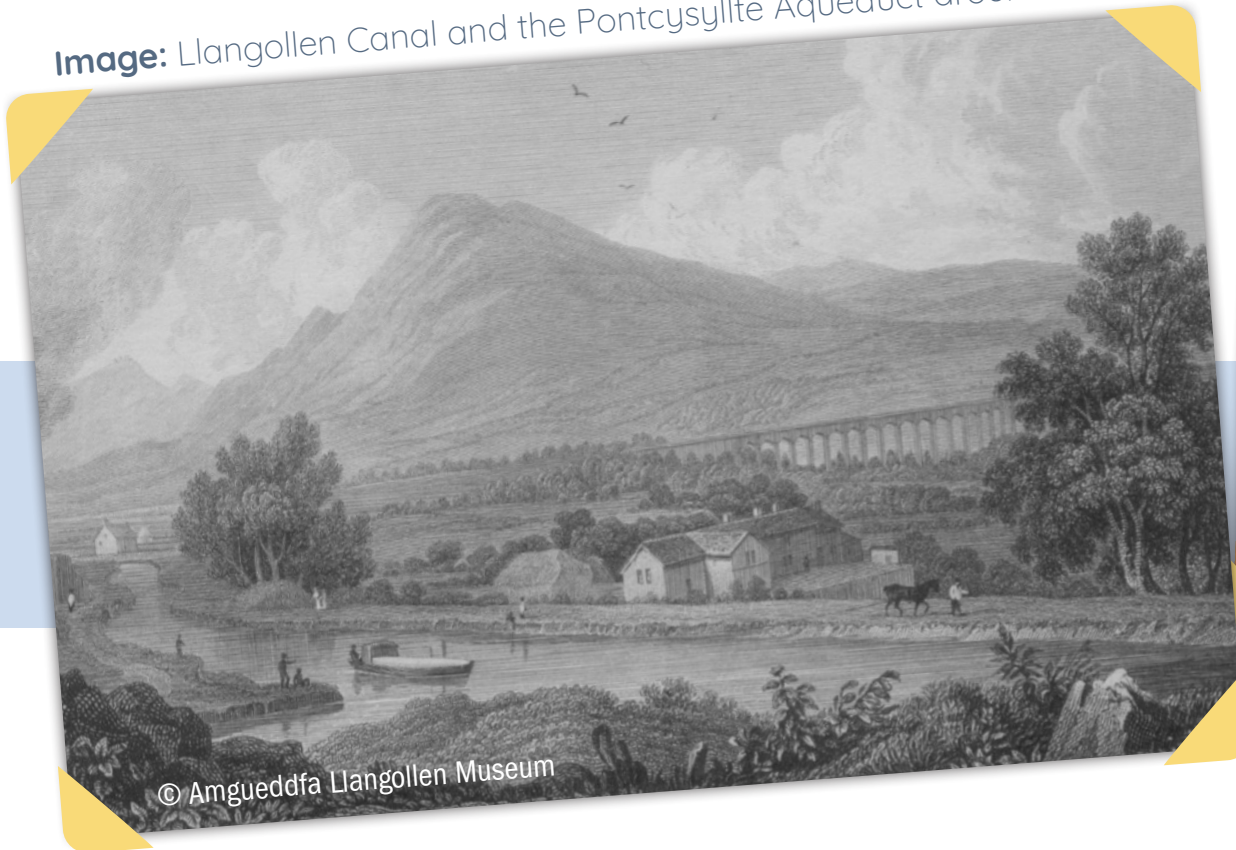
1797

“The banks of the Dee here furnish matter of contemplation and admiration for the most enthusiastic devotee to the graphic art. At every turn, the eye is delighted by new beauties of nature:--- with romantic loveliness she breaks upon the astonished traveller; and the mind is absolutely bewildered in endeavouring to give a preference to any single charm.”

Henry Wigstead, ‘Remarks on a tour to North and South Wales

Early 19th Sources Canal Era ①

Image: Llangollen Canal and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct around 1830



© Amgueddfa Llangollen Museum



Transport: Stage coach, 1835



Map: Laurie and Whittle inland navigation map 1808

www.



Early 19th Sources Canal Era 2

Traveller quotes

1815

“The entrance of North Wales is very prepossessing. Chirk is a beautiful village, washed by a stream of the same name; the banks are very steep, and the dell which they form is crossed by an aqueduct.

A far finer aqueduct, of fifteen arches, crosses the Dee, as you enter the vale of Llangollen. The Dee itself is a lively foaming stream, and looks the more beautiful from being contrasted with the rivers of England.”

Mary Brunton, **Emmeline With Some Other Pieces** including extracts from a journal of tours in 1815 (England and Wales)

Saturday 13 July, 1821

“...but I was perhaps disappointed with the first couple of miles of the vale of Llangollen. The hills naked of wood & the white limestone quarries on our left certainly not picturesque.”

The Secret Diaries of Anne Lister

1830

“Arrive Wales from Shrewsbury, Chirk, Vale of Llangollen, ‘the scenery is beautiful, the fine woods rising to the top of the mountains on each side with the river Dee winding through the valley and here and there pouring over rocks and forming waterfalls has a very fine effect. The two aqueducts, one of 10, the other of 18, arches add much to the beauty of the scenery.”

Frances Sayer, Tour of Wales

1816 A Frenchman's description

“From Chester I went to Wales, to visit the works of the Ellesmere canal; the most important, in my opinion, was the aqueduct of Pont-y-Cyssiltan, thrown over the torrent-like river which flows through the valley of Llangollen. At the height of 127 feet, and for a length of 1000 feet, you see an aerial canal, the metallic envelope of which is supported by bold and light piles. Boats heavily laden, and the horses which tow them, securely pass over this road, hanging over an abyss, and carrying to Ellesmere the coal, the lime, and the iron furnished by the mines, the quarries, and the forges of the vale of Llangollen...

Lost in the contemplation of these beauties of art and nature, which by the fading away of the declining light, changed their appearance every moment, I stood as it were in ecstasy, till the close of twilight obliged me to retire, and seek an asylum at some miles' distance.”

Charles Dupin, *Memoires on the Marine Bridges and Highroads of France and England*, vol. 2

1833

“No eyes but those of a poet are worthy to behold the celebrated valley of Llangollen”

Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley, or Hours in England and Wales* 1833

Late 19th Sources Railway Era ①

Image: Horse drawn tourist boat on Llangollen canal c1900



Courtesy of Paul Lawton



Transport: Llangollen Station, 1872



Map: 1st edition 1880

www.





Late 19th Sources Railway Era 2

Traveller quotes

Llangollen

"Llangollen ... is the centre of numberless delightful walks and excursions, and the more you know it the better you will like it... There are comfortable lodgings in the town and neighbourhood, and excellent hotel accommodation, the two principle houses being the well known Hand and the King's Head, or rather "The Royal," for its name was changed after the Princess Victoria halted there when Her Royal Highness made a tour in Wales with the Duchess of Kent in 1832.

One of the most charming of the many lovely walks from Llangollen is within the compass of the feeblest pedestrian – to Berwyn and Llantysilio Church. The train runs to Berwyn, or a "fly-boat" carries passengers along the canal, a pleasant and pretty little voyage."

Extracts from the Gossipping Guide to Wales

1854

"The house or cottage, for it was called a cottage though it consisted of two stories, in which my wife had procured lodgings for us, was situated in the Northern suburb. Its front was towards a large perllan or orchard which sloped down gently to the banks of the Dee, its back was towards the road leading from Wrexham, behind which was a high bank, on the top of which was a canal called in Welsh the Camlas."

Wild Wales, George Borrow

1886 From Ruabon to Llangollen train journey

"Starting from Ruabon to Llangollen, we are ready for a plunge into the Valley. Behind us to the left, we see Waterloo Tower of Wynnstay Park, and soon we reach a station – Acrefair – close to the British Iron Company's extensive works; with the mining town of Cefn covering the hills close by on the left. At the next station, Trevor, if our friends can get to the left hand window of the carriage, they must look up and down and enjoy their privilege. Robertson's viaduct spans the vale to the east. Telford's aqueduct carrying the canal across is below us, and there is a fine view up and down the valley. The Pontcysylltau aqueduct deserves notice, for it is a beautiful feature in the landscape as well as a wonderful piece of engineering... Before we reach Llangollen, Castell Dinas Brân (on the right), with the Eglwyseg Rocks to the right of it, will attract our attention, and as we approach the station we run under a new arch of Llangollen Bridge, another of the Wonders of Wales, though why it should be not very plain to the passing tourist."

Extracts from the Gossipping Guide to Wales

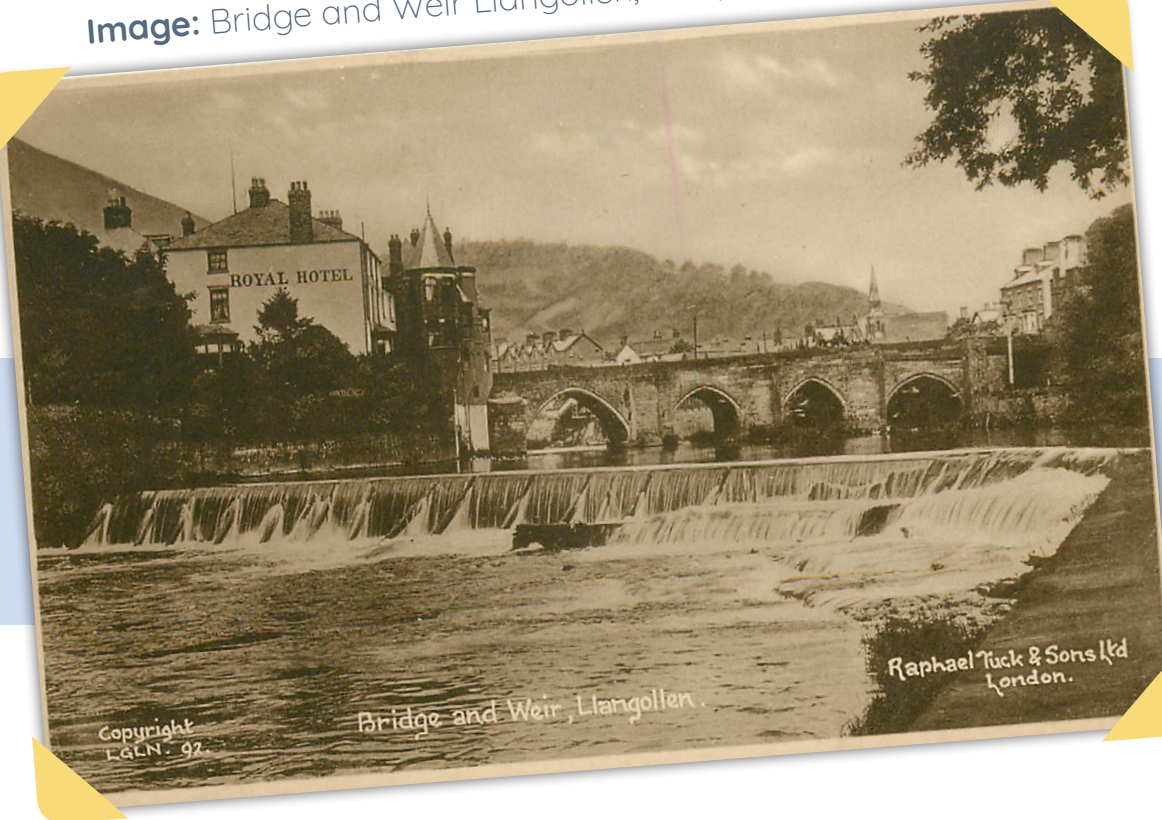


Pontcysyllte
Safle Treftadaeth Y Byd
World Heritage Site



Post War Sources (1945 – 1990s) 1

Image: Bridge and Weir Llangollen, first printed 1941



Transport: Portugese Competitors leaving the International Eisteddfod, 1947



Map: Ordnance Survey 6 inch 1953

www.





Post War Sources (1945 – 1990s) 2

Traveller quotes

1953 Llangollen

“A town in a vale in rolling green North Wales on a windy July morning. The sun squints out and is puffed back again into the grey clouds blowing, full to the ragged rims with rain, across the Berwyn Hills. The white-horsed River Dee hisses and paws over the hills of its stones and under the greybeard bridge. Wind smacks the river and you, it's a cold, cracking morning; birds hang and rasp over the whipped river. You could be in any Welsh town on any windy snip of a morning, with only the birds and the river fuming and the only brightness the numberless greens and high purples of the hills.”

Dylan Thomas 1953

1953 Llangollen

“All day the song and dancing in this transformed valley, this green cup of countries in the country of Wales, goes on until the sun goes in. Then, in the ship of the tent, under the wind-filled sails, watchers and listeners grow slow and close into one cloud of shadow; they gaze, from their deep lulled dark, on to the lighted deck where the country dancers weave in shifting-coloured harvests of light...When you leave the last voices and measures of the sweet-throated, waltzing streets, the lilt and ripple of the Dee leaping, and the light of the night, to lie down, and the strewn town lies down to sleep in its hills and ring of echoes, you will remember that nobody was surprised at the turn the town took and the life it danced for one week of the long, little year.”

Dylan Thomas 1953 (referring to the International Eisteddfod)

Present Day Sources ①

Image: Trevor Basin and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct



Transport



Map: [Google maps, Llangollen Canal](#)

www.





Present Day Sources 2

Traveller quotes

...But here at the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct in Wales, the boat that I'm looking at is actually terrifying me. Because it's slowly travelling along a canal that is suspended in the middle of the air, 40 metres above the ground, with nothing but a long drop beneath it.

It looks so scary and precarious. Yet, somehow, it's still a delightful sight. In fact – it's probably even more so!

I think particularly about Pont du Gard in France, which I visited last year. This enormous bridge was constructed between two hills to allow for the gradual flow of drinking water along an aqueduct.

Here in Wales, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is actually not that different in what it is trying to achieve (although the canal is for boats, not just the movement of water). So the true wonder here is not that someone thought to build a bridge... but HOW they built the bridge. The engineering behind the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is pure genius.

The best way to experience the Llangollen Canal is by the very thing that it was intended for – a boat ride. It's the most popular leisure canal in Britain and probably the most beautiful. You can either go the entire length or just a part of it.

Michael Turtle www.timetravelturtle.com

Fabulous views and an amazing feat of engineering by Thomas Telford. Enjoyed walking across the aqueduct and watching the canal activity.

Stunning views. Stunning history. However, if you're not good with heights the aqueduct bridge might not be the best for you. The walk over the bridge is lovely, great views but it is HIGH. You do feel you could fall off or in the water especially if the wind is blowing. It isn't great for passing other people especially if you are big on social distancing.

We parked outside the old chapel (Tea rooms). Great place to stop and explore, amazing views from the aqueduct and great to view boats crossing this amazing man made feature. Information boards, grand all round experience and we had lunch at the same tea rooms to absorb our experience.

The Aqueduct is a deeply impressive work of engineering. I was encouraged to go out of my way to visit it as it featured on a list of "top places to visit in Wales". Very much worth it.

Trip Advisor review 2020