**No.365 ‘A View of 'Llam Lleids on Dee, a Mile Beyond Llangollen, North Wales’**

**No.366 ‘A view of the waterfall of Llangollen and the mountain called Moel-y-Bache’**

As Welsh is my first language and the language in in which I spend most of my time, there are a few details with regards to this query that stand out to me, which I feel may be useful to consider.

I think that Llam Lleids may be a mistake contemporary with the painting. I think that the Moel-y-Bache is more of a physical description than it's given name.

This may be the reason why the places in the titles of the paintings exhibited in the Royal Academy cannot be found in a regular search of the maps of the area. I think that they can both be better geographically placed with a little understanding of the culture and language.

Having worked out where these two paintings are supposed to be geographically, it's difficult to imagine them being the image of this discussion.

The castle in the image in question does look very similar to Castell Dinas Bran. But as previously stated in the thread the topography is very different.

**Llangollen**

Until the 1790's Llangollen was described as one long street. John Hughes, the creator of some of the 18th-century maps of the town stated in 1810 that until approximately ‘60 years ago there was no signage in the town at all’.

Hughes also described the route through the town:

‘At that time all travelling and traffic was through the village, from Pentre Felin Hen under the church yard, turning by the Hand, between the hotel and the Post Office up to the George & Dragon (now the Grapes Hotel) turning on the right through Pentre Morgan for Corwen. Regent Street was not then made, all were gardens and green fields. There were no names on the streets or numbers on the houses then. Llangollen was an insignificant village, 60 years ago!’

**Moel y Bache**

Many presume that Bache is derived from the Welsh word for small (bach), but in this context I believe it is from the old English meaning a valley with a stream running through. It has an 'e' at the end. According to the Tythe books, 'Bache' was one of the townships in the parish of Llangollen, in the Vale of Llangollen, most of the land being owned by the Myddletons of Chirk Castle. It was very close to the railway station and St Collen's Church.

A Moel is a bald topped hill (A man that has a bald head is usually described in Welsh as having a 'pen moel').

The '*Moel-y-Bache'* would usually refer to the Moel of the Bache area. It's not necessarily the name of it, but the description and location.

The Nant-y-Bache (stream or brook of the Bache) flowed from the mountains, through the Bache area and joined the Dee river.  The Moel-y-Bache was also said to have a waterfall on the opposite side of the hill. The furthest side away from the Castle on the Dinas Bran.

The main Moel in the Bache area was called '*Moel-y-Geraint*'. This was renamed '*Moel-y-Barbwr*' or 'Barber's Hill' in 1739 after the local Barber and Schoolmaster was found guilty of murder and was himself gibbetted on the Moel. (Some maps changed, others did not)

**I think it's possible that *Moel-y-Bache* was called *Moel-y-Geraint* and subsequently *Bryn-y-Barbwr (*Barber's Hill)**

The attached image shows the '*Moel-y-Bache'* in the 1860's as 'Barber's Hill'. The Hill had steep sides and a '*Pen Moel*' (Bald head). The name of the Bache can be seen as a legacy in many buildings and roads in the area today.

I don't think that it is possible for the painting to include Barber's Hill and ‘Castell Dinas Bran’ with them both being the same side of the river, as they are actually on opposite sides of the river with the river running in between. Other than the *Castle* there is nothing that looks like the 'Barber’s Hill' or the rock formation shown in the painting. Even if it was taken from 'Barbers Hill' the topography around 'Castell Dinas Bran' is very different. Although, to be fair, the Castle does look very similar.

The map contemporary to the time also show the waterfalls on Moel-y-Geraint on the furthest side away from Castell Dinas Bran. Out of sight of the Castle.

Attached is an example of the Moel from near the railway station and a view of Llangollen from the Moel.

**Llam Lleids/Llam-y-Lleidr**

From a grammatical point of view, I think that the words 'Llam Llaids' could also be a mistake. As a Welsh speaker, I don't personally feel that the words look or feel right. The combination of letters with the 's' on the end looks a little odd.

A 'Llam' is a leap, and if put in a sentence in Welsh, it tends to be used as:

'leap of' = Llam-y-\*       or     '\*'s leap' = \*-y-Llam.

In this context I would ordinarily expect that it would be '*Llam-y'* (The leap of). The small 'y' in the middle means 'of the' and is sometimes one of the first things that non-Welsh speakers can miss when it is heard in a conversation.

There doesn't seem to be any reference to Llaids in the Llangollen area at all.

There are several references to a large waterfall at various distances away from Llangollen along the river Dee. It was call Llam-y-Lleidr.

The name was used with certain types of waterfall. There were a few Llam-y-Leidr's across Wales, all with similar properties e.g. Harlech, Tal-y-llyn etc

'Llam-y-Lleidr' has been a part of Welsh folklore over the centuries as it literally means 'the leap of the thief', ('Llam-y-Lladron' - Leap of the Thieves or Thieves' leap). In some places, the waterfalls (be it folklore or fact) were thought to have been used as a tool in order to inflict retribution against people found guilty of crimes. Many were well-known by locals because of the function that they had supposedly been used for, even if this was said to have happened a considerable time before. There is conflicting information as to the severity of these punishments. Some accounts say were used in a similar manner to the Tarpeian Rock in Rome, almost certainly a death sentence. Some say it was more of a non-fatal deterrence.

George Borrow was based in 'Dee Cottage' in Llangollen during the period that he was writing his book 'Wild Wales' in the 1860s. During a walk one evening, a conversation was had with a gentleman that lived in a cottage on the riverbank. The gentleman suggested that Mr Borrow visit a local landmark called 'Llam-y-lleidr': ‘it is a place that all the strangers come to see’. Borrow’s account is attached, although the name 'Llam-y-lleidr' is spelled at least two different ways in his book. There appears to be a regular inconsistency in the way 'Llam-y-lleidr' has been used in print.

There was also an accident where a man drowned on that stretch of the river Dee, after getting into trouble in his coracle at Llam-y-Lleidr. The Llam y Lleidr of Llangollen was reputed to be a waterfall of approximately eighty feet high and six yards across (although the size does seem to vary slightly). Llam-y-Lleidr was between Chainbridge and Pentrefelin on the river Dee.

There is also a contemporary map from the Maelor Anglers with specific points along the Dee and I think that it is marked as 'Robbers Leap'.

<http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/collections/getrecord/GB209_PPD-63>

The Denbighsire archives may be able to help as they have postcards from 1910 (attached).

* + PPD/63/235: Photograph of The river Dee at Robber's Leap (n.d. [c.1910])
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Even though the work was exhibited during Mullins’ lifetime, I feel that there may have been some confusion with regards to the names given to the locations of these two paintings and that it is possible that this has happened due to his inability to speak Welsh in a Welsh-speaking area, a lack of written signage or references in books, colloquialisms for local landmarks, and differences between the Welsh and English language. There is also the possibility that a cursive 'r' can sometimes be taken as a cursive 's'.