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978-1-108-08395-9 - The History of the Roman Wall,,: Which Crosses the Island of Britain from the German Ocean to the Irish Sea: Describing its Antient State, and its Appearance in the Year 1801

William Hutton

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### **The History of the Roman Wall, which Crosses the Island of Britain from the German Ocean to the Irish Sea**

The energetic and eccentric William Hutton (1723–1815) was apprenticed in a Derby silk-mill, but taught himself book-binding, determined to set up in the young and thriving city of Birmingham, to which he moved in 1750. From selling second-hand books, he moved on to new books and then acquired a paper warehouse. Investment in land as well as the book trade brought in a comfortable living, and in 1782 he published his *History of Birmingham*, of which the second edition of 1783 is also reissued in this series. Hutton was also famous for his walking exploits, which led to his 1801 expedition to Hadrian's Wall. His account of his walk northward from Birmingham to Carlisle and then along the wall and back again, and home, includes a history of the wall and a description of the surviving ruins along its length. The corrected second edition of 1813 is reissued here.

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*Engraved by James Basire*

**WILLIAM HUTTON ESQ. F.S.A.S. ÆT. 81.**

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DESCRIBING  
ITS ANTIENT STATE,  
AND  
ITS APPEARANCE IN THE YEAR 1801.  
—  
BY W. HUTTON, F. A. S. S.  
—  
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TO JOHN NICHOLS, Esq.

SIR,

I TAKE the liberty, without  
soliciting your consent, to inscribe this  
Work to you.

Although your laborious and successful  
pen has embraced a County ; you will not  
overlook a few mutilated Ditches, and a  
broken Wall. It is characteristic of the  
spreading Oak, to shelter the humble Bush.

Whatever is worthy of remark, will at-  
tract your eye.—Though your humanity  
will feel, for the antient animosity, the  
plunder, and murder, upon the Borders of

a 2

the

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DEDICATION.

the two respectable Nations ; yet you will  
rejoice, that concord is established along  
the line of the Wall ; and that, instead of  
rancour, robbery, burning, and blood, civi-  
lization has not only taken place, but even  
generosity.

You will also pardon the errors of the  
Work ; for you know I was not bred to  
Letters, but, that the Battledore, at an age  
not exceeding six, was the last book I  
used at school.

I am, Sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM HUTTON.

*Birmingham,*

*April 13, 1802.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.



THE kind intentions of my highly-respected Friend Mr. Hutton, in presenting me with this Work\*, were frustrated by an unfortunate Accident, which consumed all the Copies of it that were then unsold.

Enough, however, were in the hands of the publick, to establish its character, and considerably increase the reputation of its ingenious Author.

\* See page 253.

The

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The good opinion I originally entertained of the Work, is so strongly confirmed by the unanimous Approbation of the various periodical Critics ; that I cannot resist selecting some passages from the principal ones :

“ Singular characters undertake singular adventures, and relate them in a singular manner. We have a case in point before us. A gentleman, at the age of 78, takes a pedestrian journey of 600 miles, with a black wallet and an umbrella at his back, to explore the whole length of Severus’s Wall, for the purpose of ascertaining its present state ! Animated by the enthusiasm of an Antiquary, the relics of this the most stupendous monument of Britain might be to him a matter of curiosity ; but can an old man render his account of an old wall interesting ? Yes. Mr. Hutton, though by no means in his ‘ *second childhood*,’ is as alert and playful as a kitten ; and that reader must be saturnine indeed, who can peruse his book without being amused. We will not say that Nature, after she made Mr. Hutton, ‘ broke

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‘broke the mould:’ but we may venture to assert that we might stand at Charing Cross, and not meet one individual like him. If he has oddities, he has much sense and goodness of heart blended with them; and he seems to have more wit than commonly falls to the share of an Antiquary. From the title of his work we anticipated no great entertainment: but we were agreeably disappointed: and his tour to the Roman Wall has afforded us not less pleasure than information.—This tour, the result of singular enthusiasm in a man of 78, will be of use in correcting the errors of writers who have copied from each other without examination. Mr. Hutton supposes that he is the only man who has travelled the whole length of the wall, and is probably the last who will attempt it. The former part of his assertion may be true: but it is not unlikely that his book may put some other Antiquary on the trot; and if this should be the case, we recommend it to him to take a servant, provided with the means of excavating the earth near the military stations; for it must be remembered that, if Mr. Hutton, considering his age, performed wonders, his survey was rapid, and merely

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merely superficial. Any farther examination, also, should be undertaken without much delay; for this Antiquarian Pilgrim states, with great indignation and sorrow, that important dilapidations are making on the remains of this precious relic; and he gives it as his opinion, that it has suffered more in the last century, than in the fifteen preceding."

*Monthly Review, March 1806, p. 269.*

"Mr. HUTTON has often contributed to the entertainment of the publick, and is very facetious and good-humoured. At the age of 78, Mr. Hutton undertook and performed a journey of six hundred miles, to see what he laughingly calls 'a shattered wall,' but what really is the first and most remarkable specimen of Antiquity, which our Island has to boast. Camden, Horsley, Warburton, and Gough, have all treated on the subject; but probably the present Author is the only individual who ever traversed the whole length of the wall. His narrative is accompanied by many pleasant anecdotes, related in his accustomed tone of vivacity and humour; and by eight plates, illustrative of the objects of his journey."

*British Critic, Jan. 1803.*

"Various

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“ Various circumstances have called off our attention from the works of this lively and respectable Veteran, whose ‘ sear and yellow leaf’ of life is well employed in little excursions, which he describes with peculiar spirit and *naïveté*. The Roman Wall seems to have haunted Mr. Hutton’s fancy from his early years. Not the tomb of Amandus and Amanda so filled, of yore, the mind of the facetious, the whimsical Yorick: but more happy our Author; for he found at least the remains of a wall on which to drop a tear, the ruins of another Troy, over which he might heave a sigh. This ‘ wonderful structure—the united work of a commander in chief and two emperors, assisted by three powerful armies, and aided by a long series of years,’—he at last visited at the age of 78, having walked 600 miles to see a shattered ruin. Mr. Hutton blames, with equal justice and severity, the usual dry forbidding style of the Antiquary. He has pursued a different path.—Our Author’s Tour is entertaining in many respects, and in some instructive. We leave him with regret; but we shall soon rejoin him in his way to North Wales, and again accompany him to Scarborough.”

*Critical Review*, 1804, Vol. III. p. 187.

“ The

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“The entertaining, interesting, and novel manner which this worthy Veteran adopts in his topographical and antiquarian writings, must be pleasing to almost every class of readers. In the Preface to the Present work, we discover particular and engaging traits of the Author’s mind, and at the same time meet with that information on the subject, and on Antiquities in general, which afford us much gratification. Mr. Hutton proceeds to relate some historical particulars of this celebrated rampart, and discriminates the parts that were erected at different periods, and by different generals. This part of his work furnishes many interesting traits of the history and policy of the Romans, and strikingly characterises the unhappy times when plunder, murder, and all the consequent miseries of savage war, conspired to deluge the plains with blood.—Mr. Hutton gives a description of his journey in tracing the Wall from the first station at Segedunum, or the Wall’s end, to the eighteenth station, Tunnoce-lum, now called Boulness. In this excursion he meets with various characters, scenes, and incidents, which are related with much good-humoured quaintness; and the account he gives  
of



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of the present appearance of the works serves to gratify our curiosity, and correct some mis-statements of preceding writers.—The preceding extracts and remarks will enable our readers to appreciate the character of the volume before us, which on the whole we consider as an amusing and interesting portion of topographical history. The lively and cheerful manners of the Author captivate the fancy, and we follow him through the progress of his journey with sympathy and curiosity. The venerable relick which attracted his notice excites the latter; and we cannot but sympathize with the respectable and amiable Author, who at the age of 78, undertook such a ‘laborious, romantic, and quixotic undertaking,’ as he terms it.”

AIKIN’S *Annual Review*, 1802, p. 468.

“You never can bring a WALL :—What say you, Bottom ?”

“Some man, or other, must present WALL ?” SHAKSPEARE.

“We have received much pleasure in reviewing former topographical works of this Writer, who keeps up the ball of curiosity and narrative to the last. Some good stories, and suitable observations on them, are told of the state of the Border, and the debatable ground in succeeding times, till the latter was divided between

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between the two nations in 1549.—At Penrith the father and daughter parted—he for the Wall, she for the Lakes. Antiquaries as we are, we wish they had kept together.”

“ Thus have I, WALL, my part discharged so,  
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.” SHAKSPEARE.

*Mr. GOUGH, in Gent. Mag. 1804, p. 633.*

Sanctioned by such respectable authority, I hesitate not to submit this second Edition to the candour of the publick.

On application to its venerable Author, who, at full twenty years beyond the age of man, still enjoys his strong mental faculties, I was favoured with some material corrections ; accompanied by a letter from his excellent daughter ; which I am permitted to prefix to her Father’s work, for the gratification of its readers ; who will not be displeased to see the Portrait of Mr. HUTTON, introduced as a Frontispiece to the Work.

Oct. 1, 1813.

J. NICHOLS.

“ To

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“To JOHN NICHOLS, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

*Bennet's Hill,*  
*June 3, 1813.*

My Father is happy to find his ‘Roman Wall’ possesses such a portion of your esteem as to engage you to re-print it. He has nothing to add on that subject ; but I transcribe the copy of a letter of my own, written some years ago to Mr. Pratt, who requested me to furnish him with some particulars of my Father’s journey. Though my letter was written without any idea of its being published, Mr. Pratt thought it contained so faithful a picture of my Father, that he asked, and obtained, leave to insert it in his ‘Harvest Home.’ This, however, for some reason of his own, he declined doing ; and it is very much at your service, if you think it a proper

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proper appendage to your new edition of  
the ‘Roman Wall.’ My Father says, it tells  
him more of himself than he knew before,  
and has copied it into his Manuscript Life.

I am, dear Sir, with great regard,  
Your very grateful and obedient servant,  
CATHERINE HUTTON.”

“ To S. S. PRATT, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

Our summer’s excursion  
in 1801 was ardently wished for by us  
both. My Father’s object was, to see the  
Roman Wall; mine, the Lakes of Cum-  
berland and Westmoreland. We talked it  
over, by our fire-side, every evening the  
preceding winter. He always insisted upon  
setting out on foot, and performing as  
much of the journey as he should be able  
in

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in the same manner. I made little objection to his plan ; reserving myself for a grand attack at last.

When the time drew near, I represented to my Father that it was impossible he should walk the whole way ; though I agreed with him that he could walk a considerable part : the only difference between us was, whether he should ride to prevent mischief, or after mischief was done. I besought him, with tears, to go as far as Liverpool in a carriage, and walk afterwards as he might find it expedient ; but he was inflexible. All I could obtain was, a promise that he would take care of himself.

I rode on a pillion behind a servant ; and our mode of travelling was this. My Father informed himself at a night how he could get out of the house the next morning, before the servants were stirring

He

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He rose at four o'clock, walked to the end of the next stage, breakfasted, and waited for me. I set out at seven; and, when I arrived at the same inn, breakfasted also. When my Father had rested two hours, he set off again. When my horse had fed properly, I followed; passed my Father on the road, arrived before him at the next inn, and bespoke dinner and beds.

My Father was so careful not to be put out of his regular pace, that he would not allow me to walk by his side, either on foot or on horseback; not even through a town. The only time I ever did walk with him was through the street of Warrington; and then, of my own accord, I kept a little behind, that I might not influence his step. He chose that pace which was the least exertion to him, and never varied it. It looked like a saunter; but it was  
steady,

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steady, and got over the ground at the rate of full two miles and a half in an hour.

When the horse on which I rode saw my Father before him, he neighed, though at the distance of a quarter of a mile ; and the servant had some trouble to hold him in. He once laid the reins upon his neck; and he trotted directly up to my Father, then stopped, and laid his head on his shoulder.

My Father delivered all his money to me before we left home, reserving only a few pieces of loose coin, in case he should want on the road. I paid all bills; and he had nothing to do but walk out of an inn, when he found himself sufficiently refreshed.

My Father was such an enthusiast with regard to the *Wall*, that he turned neither to the right or the left, except to gratify me with a sight of Liverpool. Winander

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Mere he saw, and Ullswater he saw ; be-  
cause they lay under his feet ; but nothing  
could detain him from his grand object.

When we had reached Penrith, we took a  
melancholy breakfast, and parted, with a  
tear half suppressed on my Father's side,  
and tears not to be suppressed on mine.  
He continued his way to Carlisle ; I turned  
westward for Keswick. After a few days  
stay there, I went back to Hest Bank, a  
small sea-bathing place near Lancaster,  
where we had appointed to meet.

While I remained at Hest Bank, I re-  
ceived two scraps of paper, torn from my  
Father's pocket-book ; the first dated from  
Carlisle, July 20 ; in which he told me he  
was sound in body, shoe, and stocking,  
and had just risen from a lodging among  
fleas. The second from Newcastle, July 23,  
when he informed me “ he had been at the  
Wall's End ; that the weather was so hot  
he



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he was obliged to repose under hedges; and that the country was infested with thieves : but, lest I should be under any apprehensions for his personal safety, he added, they were only such as demolished his idol, the Wall, by stealing the stones of which it was composed.”

On the fifth morning after my arrival at Hest Bank, before I was up, I heard my Father cry *Hem!* on the stairs. I answered by calling out *Father!* which directed him to my room; and a most joyful meeting ensued. He continued here four days, wondered at and respected by the company. We set out on our return home in the same manner as before, and reached it in safety.

During the whole journey I watched my Father with a jealous eye. The first symptom of fatigue I observed was at Budworth, in Cheshire; after he had lost his

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way,

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way, and been six hours upon his legs ; first in deep sands, and then on pavement road. At Liverpool his spirits were good ; but I thought his voice rather weaker. At Preston he first said he was tired ; but, having walked eleven miles farther, to Garstang, he found himself recovered ; and never after, to the best of my remembrance, uttered the least complaint. He usually came into an inn in high spirits, ate a hearty meal, grew sleepy after it, and in two hours was rested. His appetite never forsook him. He regarded strong liquors with abhorrence. Porter he drank, when he could get it ; ale and spirits, never. He mixed his wine with water ; but considered water, alone, as the most refreshing beverage.

On our return, walking through Ashton, a village in Lancashire, a dog flew at my Father, and bit his leg ; making a wound

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wound about the size of a sixpence. I found him sitting in the inn at Newton, where he had appointed to breakfast, deploring the accident, and dreading its consequences. They were to be dreaded. The leg had yet a hundred miles to walk, in extreme hot weather. I comforted my Father. ‘Now,’ said I, ‘you will reap the fruit of your temperance; you have put no strong liquors or high sauces into your leg; you eat but when you are hungry, and drink but when you are thirsty; and this will enable your leg to carry you home. The event shewed I was right. The wound was sore; and the leg, round it, was inflamed, as every leg under such circumstances must be; but it never was very troublesome, or ever indulged with a plaster.

From the time we parted at Penrith, till we reached home, the weather was extremely

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tremely hot. My Father frequently walked with his waistcoat unbuttoned ; but the perspiration was so excessive, that I have even felt his coat damp on the outside, from the moisture within ; and his bulk visibly diminished every day. When we arrived at Wolseley Bridge, on our return, I was terribly alarmed at this, and thanked God he had but one day more to walk.

When we got within four days of the completion of our journey, I could no longer restrain my Father. We made forced marches ; and if we had had a little further to go, the foot would fairly have knocked up the horse. The pace he went did not even fatigue his shoes. He walked the whole six hundred miles in one pair ; and scarcely made a hole in his stockings.

I am, dear Sir,

Your very sincere friend and servant,

CATHERINE HUTTON.”

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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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THERE are few pursuits, in the compass of letters, more dry than that of Antiquity. The Antiquary feeds upon withered husks, which none can relish but himself; nor does he seem to possess the art of dressing up his dried morsel to suit the palate of a reader, for his language is often as dry as his subject; as if the smile was an enemy to Truth. Mere dull description, like a burnt cinder, is dead matter. If he designs a *treat*, why not infuse a little spice to suit the taste of his guest?

The description also of Antiquities is not only the dullest of all descriptions, but is rendered

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## xxiv THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

rendered more dull by abstruse terms ; by as much Learning as the Author can muster, and Latin, as the page can conveniently hold. Instead of inviting, it rather repels a reader. Thus Truth, dressed out like a beau, in flourishing trappings, is scarcely known ; but would please in a plain dress.

My dear and learned Reader, though I treat of the Latins, I have no Latin with which I can treat you. My language, like myself, will display something of the Quaker.

I would enliven truth with the smile, with the anecdote ; and, while I travel the long and dreary Wall, would have you travel with me, though by your own fire-side ; would have you see, and feel, as I do ; and make the journey influence your passions, as mine are influenced.

The

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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.      xxv

The Antiquary values a piece according to its authenticity. A piece of coin, not worth a shilling, will bring many times its intrinsic worth, when its history is known. But, if its Antiquity be ever so great, if the history be dark, the value is no more than its weight.

When pieces of Antiquity are common, like old clothes, they lose much of their consequence. Thus, the coins found at *Verulam*, which I have seen by handfals, are almost rated at nought.

If the mind is delighted at the sight of a *watch* worn by Charles the First; a sword carried through France before Edward the Third; a *spur* worn by William the Conqueror; or with a Danish battle-axe; what astonishment must arise at the sight of the grandest production of Art in the whole Island! the united work of a  
Com-

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## xxvi THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Commander in Chief and two Emperors, assisted by three powerful armies, and aided by a long series of years !

Having had the pleasure of seeing many Antiques of various ages and people, it naturally excited a desire of proceeding in farther research ; and the eye, unsatisfied with seeing, induced a wish to see the greatest of all the curiosities left us by the Romans, *The Wall*, the wonderful and united works of Agricola, Hadrian, and Severus.

I consulted all the Authors I could procure ; which strengthened desire. But I found they were only echoes to each other. Many had written upon the subject ; but I could discover, that very few had even seen it, and not a soul had penetrated from one end to the other. Besides, if those who paid a transient visit chose to *ride*, they could not be minute observers.

Poor



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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE. xxvii

Poor CAMDEN travelled it till he was frightened, ran away, and wrote hastily. HORSLEY was weary, and retreated; but wrote more correctly. The judicious WARBURTON, whom I regard for his veracity, rode on; desisted, and then remarked, “He believed he had trod upon ground which no foot had ever trodden since the Romans.” He also transcribes HORSLEY, whom Mr. GOUGH professes to follow.

I envied the people in the neighbourhood of the Wall, though I knew they valued it no more than the soil on which it stood. I wished to converse with an intelligent resident, but never saw one.

I determined to spend a month, and fifty guineas, in minutely examining the relicks of this first of wonders; began to form my plan of operations, and wrote my sentiments to an eminent Printer in London,

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## xxviii THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

don, for whom I have a singular regard ;  
but, receiving no answer, I gave up the  
design, and, as I thought, for ever ; de-  
stroyed my remarks ; closed with regret all  
my books of intelligence, and never durst  
open them, lest it should revive a strong  
Inclination, which I could not gratify.

About four years elapsed, when my fa-  
mily agreed with a gentleman and his lady  
to visit the LAKES. They enlisted me of  
the party, in which they found no diffi-  
culty, because the temptation lay in the  
neighbourhood of that wonder which had  
long engaged my ideas.

I have given a short sketch of my ap-  
proach to this famous Bulwark ; have de-  
scribed it as it appears in the present day,  
and stated my return.

Perhaps, I am the first man that ever  
travelled the whole length of this Wall,  
and

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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.   xxix

and probably the last that ever will attempt it. Who then will say, he has, like me, travelled it twice?

Old people are much inclined to accuse youth of their follies ; but on this head silence will become me, lest I should be asked, “ What can exceed the folly of that man, who, at seventy-eight, walked six hundred miles to see a shattered Wall !”

W. H.

*Birmingham, April 13,*  
1802.

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