

Eighteenth-century letter-writers



The Welsh writer Hester Thrale, later Piozzi (1741- 1821) and Shakespearean critic Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) were friends and fellow intellectuals interested in theatre, the arts and architecture, travelling and literature. They were indefatigable letter-writers and held rival London salons where witty conversationalists gathered. In 2011 we had two HA lectures on Bluestockings by Les Turnbull and Mike Franklin when we heard how both were also pioneer businesswomen, Hester running Thrale's brewery after his death, with the help of Dr Johnson, and Elizabeth managing an important Newcastle colliery.

A team led by Caroline Franklin at Swansea University is editing the correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu and we need help in transcribing some of these fascinating letters which are fairly short – about 3-4 pages. And Elizabeth generally has excellent handwriting as you can see from the sample below! No previous experience is necessary and you don't need a computer. Get in touch and we will send you a copy of a letter and full instructions on how to do the transcription. You can give Caroline your transcription at an HA meeting, or send it to her by email attachment or letter, and she will check it. When the edition of Montagu's correspondence is published, the transcriber's initials will be given. It would be wonderful if the Swansea branch could transcribe all 35 of the letters from Elizabeth to Hester so that we could acknowledge the branch in our introduction. This is a pilot project for 'crowdsourcing' our transcriptions and if it is successful we will ask other HA branches to help.

If you would like to transcribe a letter, please email c.franklin@swansea.ac.uk or telephone her at university on 01792 604304, or write to her c/o Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts and Humanities, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA 2 8PP.

To find out about the project, click on <http://elizabethmontaguletters.co.uk/home>

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Bydd ein prosiect ymchwil yn drawsgrifio y llythyrau o Elizabeth Montagu. Caiff ei arwain gan Caroline Franklin ym Mhrifysgol Abertawe. Mae 35 o lythyrau gan Elizabeth i'r awdur Cymreig Hester Thrale (néé Salusbury). Rydym yn gobeithio y bydd y Gymdeithas Hanesyddol Abertawe helpu. Os hoffech chi i drawsgrifio llythyr i ni ysgrifennwch at c.franklin@swansea.ac.uk

To Find out more about Hester Thrale read Michael Franklin's account on Oxford Dictionary of National Biography <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22309?docPos=2>

To find out more about Elizabeth Montagu read Barbara Schnorrenberg's ODNB article <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19014?docPos=1>

Sample of a letter from Elizabeth to Hester, thanking her for a poem and sending her best wishes to Dr Johnson

Sampl o lythyr oddi wrth Elizabeth i Hester, yn diolch iddi am gerdd a anfon ei ddymuniadau gorau at Dr Johnson

