

Treasures of the Fintry Trust Library

5. The Costume of the Original Inhabitants of the British Islands from the Earliest Periods to the Sixth Century by Samuel Rush Meyrick and Charles Hamilton Smith. 1821.



This volume is a later edition of a work first published in 1814. In a footnote on the first page of the text it is stated that the principal matter contained in the book has been extracted from three large quarto manuscript volumes in which Dr. Meyrick 'has collected whatever relates to the inhabitants of the Britannic Isles, from their first arrival till the termination in the year 703 of the British sovereignty in England'. Samuel Rush Meyrick (1783-1848) was a passionate collector of antiquities as well as a scholar of arms and armour. He studied Civil Law and practised as an advocate in ecclesiastical and admiralty courts. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. The book contains a coloured frontispiece and 24 hand coloured aquatint plates, all drawn by Charles Hamilton Smith (1776-1859). Smith was an artist, antiquary, natural historian, and soldier. A prolific illustrator, Smith estimated that he had completed over 38,000 drawings, and he is known in military history circles for his *Costume of the Army of the British Empire*.



This book was the first to use archaeological evidence to help create visual images of an imagined past. Meyrick was greatly influenced by William Stukeley's work on Stonehenge. The imagined recreation of Druids and early Britons resemble to some extent the classical Gods of the Greek and Roman sculpture seen on the Grand Tour, with the addition of gold and bronze ornaments and weapons. Each of the plates has at the bottom a small engraving of an archaeological object. The prints depict costumes worn by Bardic Scholars, a Judicial Druid, Boadicea, Roman British Priestesses, and Saint Iestyn ab Geraint, among others. Costume of the inhabitants of 'the Gothic Nations on the Western Coasts of the Baltic, the Ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Danes' are also included. The Trust Library edition of this work was printed in London by Howlett and Brimmer for T. M'Lean (No. 26 Haymarket) and E. Williams (No 11 Strand) in 1821.

A companion volume entitled *Selection of the Ancient Costume of Great Britain and Ireland, from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century, out of the collection in possession of the author* was also published in 1814, with 60 hand-coloured aquatints, but is not in the Fintry Trust Library collection.

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