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Dublin Core

Title

Fishguard's Transatlantic Moment | Cyfnod Trawsatlantig Abergwaun

Subject

Fishguard

Abergwaun

Mauretania (ship)

Trans-Atlantic Route

Creator

Chris Williams

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/6ELS-MASB>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

52.01401705850959, -4.970727915371459

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

From 1909 until the First World War Fishguard competed with Liverpool as the first call of liners crossing the Atlantic from New York.

Lede (Welsh)

Rhwng 1909 a'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf bu Abergwaun yn cystadlu â Lerpwl fel y porthladd cyntaf i longau oedd yn croesi Môr Iwerydd o Efrog Newydd.

Story

In August 1909 the liner the *Mauretania* called for the first time at Fishguard, having established a new record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic from New York. A public holiday was proclaimed, and trains of day trippers from Swansea, Llanelli and other parts of South Wales arrived, gathering on Strumble Head and in the town to mark the occasion. With express trains standing by to convey both mails and passengers to London and thence to Dover and Paris, the hope was that Fishguard would quickly rival Liverpool as a port of choice for Transatlantic travellers. Construction of Fishguard Harbour had begun in 1893, initially under the direction of the Fishguard Railways and Harbours Company, which aimed to compete with the ferry terminus at Neyland owned by the Great Western Railway.

The GWR took over the project in 1898 with the hope not only of improving its traffic with Ireland, but also of challenging Liverpool's control of the Atlantic passenger market. The arrival of the *Mauretania*, at the time the world's largest ship, was heralded as a red-letter day for both Fishguard and the GWR, as it shaved about six hours off the total journey time from London to New York, which normally proceeded via Liverpool. By the time the *Mauretania*'s sister ship, the ill-fated *Lusitania* arrived in Fishguard a fortnight later, an express train which stopped just once (at Cardiff) could transfer passengers from port to London in less than five hours.

The *Mauretania* herself was greeted by a varied crowd featuring the Pembroke Dock Temperance Band, detachments of Territorial Army soldiers, and many women dressed in traditional Welsh costume. According to the *Western Mail* newspaper, 'seldom can such a large number of genuinely old Welsh costumes and beaver hats be seen together as was witnessed in this procession. It is quite probable that some of these red wintles and beaver hats were actually worn in 1797 by the gallant Welsh women who that year frightened the French invaders'. Perhaps fittingly, the first passenger to disembark the liner was a Welsh-American. Described by the newspaper as 'an old homely-looking gentleman', he wore 'a suit of grey Welsh homespun', which rendered his identity 'immediately evident to many'. 'West Wales', the report went on, 'can produce hundreds of rural residents as like him as two peas in appearance and demeanour.'

Originally from Lampeter, Jenkin Evans had lived in America for over forty years, having settled in Kansas City, and was delighted to give interviews to the press in both Welsh and English. The 'Western Mail's cartoonist J. M. Staniforth marked the enhancement of

Fishguard's status in three cartoons, one of which appeared in the British Sunday newspaper the 'News of the World'. Two of these were subsequently republished in his deluxe volume of cartoons published in 1910. In one cartoon Staniforth represented the GWR as a 'modern Hercules' who had effectively closed the distance between London and New York, and in another his stereotypical character 'Dame Wales' expressed great satisfaction over Fishguard's prospects for attracting further custom from passenger liners.

According to an editorial in the *Western Mail*, 'Liverpudlians are not taking kindly to the diversion of Atlantic trade!' However, hopes that Fishguard would prove a serious long-term rival to Liverpool proved illusory. Ideally landing piers were needed to facilitate rapid transit from large liners to shore, but the cost of building these was considered prohibitive given the sporadic nature of the traffic. And the outbreak of the First World War some five years after the arrival of the *Mauretania* put an end to further aspirations.

Story (Welsh)

Ym mis Awst 1909 galwodd y llong deithio *Mauretania* am y tro cyntaf yn Abergwaun, ar ôl creu record newydd am y croesiad cyflymaf dros Fôr Iwerydd o Efrog Newydd. Cyhoeddwyd gŵyl gyhoeddus, a chyrraeddodd trenau undydd o Abertawe, Llanelli a rhannau eraill o'r De, a daeth torfeydd ynghyd ar Ben-caer ac yn y dref i nodi'r achlysur. Gyda threnau cyflym yn aros yn barod i fynd â'r post a'r teithwyr i Lundain ac oddi yno i Dover a Paris, y gobaith oedd y byddai Abergwaun cyn hir yn herio Lerpwl fel y dewis borthladd i'r rhai oedd yn croesi'r Iwerydd. Roedd y gwaith o adeiladu Harbwr Abergwaun wedi dechrau ym 1893, yn wreiddiol o dan gyfarwyddyd Cwmni Rheilffyrdd a Harbwr Abergwaun, a anelai at gystadlu â therfynfa fferis Neyland a oedd yn perthyn i Reilffordd y Great Western.

Cymerodd y GWR y prosiect drosodd ym 1898 gyda'r gobaith nid yn unig o wella'i draffig gydag Iwerddon, ond hefyd o herio rheolaeth Lerpwl dros farchnad teithwyr yr Iwerydd. Cafodd glaniad y *Mauretania*, sef llong fwyaf y byd ar y pryd, ei weld fel diwrnod o bwys i Abergwaun a'r GWR, pan ostyngodd hi amser y daith o Lundain i Efrog Newydd o chwech awr, sef taith oedd yn mynd drwy Lerpwl fel arfer. Erbyn i chwaer long y *Mauretania*, sef yr anffodus *Lusitania*, gyrraedd Abergwaun bythefnos wedyn, llwyddodd trê'n cyflym a stopiodd unwaith yn unig (yng Nghaerdydd) i fynd â'r teithwyr o'r porthladd i Lundain mewn llai na phum awr.

Cafodd y *Mauretania* ei hun ei chyfarch gan dorf amrywiol yn cynnwys Band Dirwest Doc Penfro, adrannau o filwyr y Fyddin Dirioogaethol, a llawer o fenywod mewn gwisg draddodiadol Gymreig. Yn ôl papur newydd y *Western Mail*, 'seldom can such a large number of genuinely old Welsh costumes and beaver hats be seen together as was witnessed in this procession. It is quite probable that some of these red wintles and beaver hats were actually worn in 1797 by the gallant Welsh women who that year frightened the French invaders'. Yn briodol ddigon, Americanwr o Gymro oedd y teithiwr cyntaf i ddod oddi ar y llong. Hynafgwr digon cartrefol ei olwg oedd hwn yn ôl y papur, yn gwisgo siwt o frethyn cartref oedd yn sicrhau ei fod yn gyfarwydd ar unwaith i lawer. Aeth yr adroddiad ymlaen: 'West Wales can produce hundreds of rural residents as like him as two peas in appearance and demeanour.'

Un o Lanbedr Pont Steffan yn wreiddiol oedd Jenkin Evans a bu'n byw yn America ers dros ddeugain mlynedd, ar ôl ymgartrefu yn Kansas City. Roedd wrth ei fodd yn rhoi cyfweiliadau i'r wasg yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg. Nododd cartwnydd y 'Western Mail' J.M. Staniforth y cynnydd yn statws Abergwaun mewn tri chartŵn, ac ymddangosodd un ohonynt ym mhapur newydd dydd Sul Prydeinig y 'News of the World'. Cafodd dau o'r rhain eu hailgyhoeddi wedyn yn ei gyfrol foethus o gartwnau a gyhoeddwyd ym 1910. Mewn un cartŵn portreadodd Staniforth y GWR fel 'Ercwlff modern' a oedd i bob pwrpas wedi cau'r pellter

rhwng Llundain ac Efrog Newydd, ac mewn un arall mynegodd ei gymeriad ystrydebol 'Dame Wales' foddhad mawr ynglŷn â'r rhagolygon y byddai Abergwaun yn denu mwy o fusnes teithwyr y llongau.

Yn ôl erthygl olygyddol yn y *Western Mail*, 'Liverpoolians are not taking kindly to the diversion of Atlantic trade!' Er hynny, breuddwyd gwyrach oedd y gobaith y byddai Abergwaun yn cystadlu o ddifrif â Lerpwl yn y tymor hir. Yn ddelfrydol, roedd angen glanfeydd er mwyn i bobl a nwyddau symud yn gyflym o'r llongau i'r lan, ond barnwyd bod cost codi'r rhain yn afresymol o gofio natur ysbeidiol y traffig. A bu dechrau'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf ryw bum mlynedd ar ôl glaniad y *Mauretania* yn ddiwedd ar unrhyw obaith pellach.

Factoid

According to the *Western Mail*, many Fishguard women turning out to see the *Mauretania* arrive sported 'red wintles and beaver hats' that had been worn when their ancestors repelled the French invasion of 1797, articles which are 'now carefully preserved as heirlooms'.

Yn ôl y *Western Mail*, roedd llawer o fenywod Abergwaun a ddaeth allan i weld y *Mauretania* yn gwisgo 'red wintles and beaver hats... now carefully preserved as heirlooms' am eu bod wedi'u gwisgo pan gafodd ymosodiad y Ffrancwyr ei atal ym 1797.

Related Resources

Copies of J. M. Staniforth's cartoons can be found at roadtowarcartoons.org.

Official Website