



This item contains the Dublin core metadata attributes and Curatescape item type metadata fields for a story from the Ports, Past and Present archived collection on the digital repository of Ireland. It has been provided in .odt format for easy copy and pasting.

For more information about the Ports, Past and Present Project, see

<https://portspastpresent.eu/>.

For more information about Omeka Classic, see <https://omeka.org/classic/>.

For more information about Curatescape, its Omeka plugin suite and this item type metadata schema, see <https://curatescape.org/>.

For a .csv containing tabular data for all stories, see the larger collection at

<https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.ht259b362>.

For an archived snapshot of the story as it appeared between 2020 and 2023 on

<https://portspastpresent.eu/>, see the Relation field below.

Dublin Core

Title

The Ancient Fish Traps of Fishguard Bay | Trapiau pysgod hynafol ym Mae Abergwaun

Subject

Fishtraps

Cored bysgod

Fishguard

Abergwaun

Fishing

Pysgota

Creator

Natasha de Chroustchoff

Jeremy Martineau

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

Rights

CC BY 4.0 International License

Relation

<https://perma.cc/B9SA-8676>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

52.00323409220959, -4.9853391151559485

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Catching fish from the shore was but one of many ways to harvest the sea's bounty in the history of Fishguard.

Lede (Welsh)

Yn hanes Abergwaun pysgota o'r traeth oedd un ymhlith sawl ffordd o gynaeafu cyfoeth y môr.

Story

It is thought that Fishguard was named from the Old Norse *Fiskigarðr*, a 'fish catching enclosure'. What remains here today is very unlikely to date back that far but we know the style of low-walled hook-shaped trap is an ancient one. Remains of similar constructions can be found elsewhere around the coast of Wales and Scotland and indeed across the entire globe: the Pacific, South America, Southern Africa, Australia, Alaska and in many parts of Asia. Much like river weirs, the construction style must have been devised (or imitated) world-wide by communities of maritime folk who relied on a good fish catch to see them through the lean winter months. These fish traps were still in use around the British Isles in post-medieval times and possibly into the nineteenth century when large shoals of herrings were the mainstay of the economy of the twin towns of Fishguard and Goodwick. Catching fish from the shore was but one of many ways to harvest the sea's bounty.

These 'V' shaped stone structures made use of the materials to hand but would have needed frequent maintenance to repair recurrent wave damage. Very likely, the heaped stone walls were extended with wooden hurdles or brushwood, traces of which have been found elsewhere as part of similar traps. The fish would have been captured on a falling tide (the highest spring tides would be best) when the outgoing shoals could be driven towards the barriers by people shouting and making a commotion in the water; the retreating tide would leave many fish stranded and they could then be scooped up and captured in baskets or nets or (we like to imagine) women's skirts. It would surely be a communal activity in which able-bodied people of all ages would join and it no doubt generated a good deal of noisy excitement for the younger members of the crowd. "Tide's turned, let's go to the trap!"

The traps support a great deal of marine life: shellfish, prawns, crabs live in the crevices if you take the trouble to look. They are good places to see wading birds looking for food.

The north-west trap extends from a little way beyond the jetty or Fisherman's Quay on the edge of Goodwick Harbour and can be seen (at low tide) as you walk along the road towards the ferry terminal. It appears on eighteenth-century maritime charts and on the first Ordnance Survey map in 1889. Part of the trap was destroyed by the construction of the harbour at the

beginning of the twentieth century. The proposed development of a marina in early twenty-first century. would have meant the complete destruction of what remains but fortunately for the trap that did not go ahead.

The south-east trap can be viewed from the Marine Walk that runs along the cliffs at the back of the town. The trap lies just below the cliffs some distance beyond the old fishermen's cottages at the far eastern end of Goodwick beach. Access on foot is via the short flight of steps that can be found beside the brook as it flows down to the shore. Access to both traps should be undertaken with caution.

Although these old heaps of slimy stones along the muddy strand line have little obvious attraction to the regular holiday-maker we should acknowledge their significance in connecting the marine heritage of Twin Towns with that of far-flung communities the world over. People who lived by the sea came up with the same ideas and shared in the same activities with a common purpose. We must celebrate that and preserve these traps with as much care as any other remnant of the distant past.

Story (Welsh)

Credir mai o'r Hen Norseg 'Fiskigarðr' y daw enw Saesneg Abergwaun, a'i fod yn golygu 'amgae i ddal pysgod'. Mae'r adfeilion a welir yma heddiw yn annhebygol iawn o ddyddio i gyfnod mor gynnar, ond gwyddys fod y dull hwn o greu trap siâp bachyn gyda waliau isel yn un hynafol iawn. Gwelir olion adeiladau tebyg mewn mannau eraill ar arfordir Cymru a'r Alban, ac yn wir ar draws y byd i gyd: yn y Môr deheuol, yn Ne America, De Affrica, Alaska a sawl rhan o Asia. Yn union fel y digwyddodd gyda choredau ar afonydd, mae'n debyg bod cymunedau arfordirol byd-eang wedi datblygu neu wedi dysgu greu'r un math o adeiladau er mwyn sicrhau daliadau digonol o bysgod i'w cadw trwy fisoedd caled y gaeaf. Parhaodd y modd hwn o ddefnyddio'r trapiau pysgod mewn rhannau o Ynysoedd Prydain ar ôl yr Oesoedd Canol, ac o bosibl mor ddiweddar â'r bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg, pan oedd heigiau mawr o benwaig yn brif gynhaliath i economi'r ddwy efeitlltref Abergwaun a Gwdig. Dal pysgod o'r traeth oedd un ymhlith sawl ffordd o gasglu cyfoeth y môr.

Crëwyd y strwythurau hyn gyda'r deunydd oedd wrth law, ond byddai rhaid eu trwsio'n aml oherwydd difrod parhaol y môr. Mwy na thebyg, estynwyd y waliau o gerrig rhydd wedi eu pentyrru gyda chlwydi pren neu frigau — gwelwyd olion tebyg mewn trapiau cyffelyb o lefydd eraill. Byddai'r pysgod yn cael eu dal ar y trai (adeg y penllanw mawr fyddai orau) pan allai'r bobl yrru'r heigiau tuag at y clwydi gan waeddi a chynhyrfu'r dŵr. Ar y trai, wedyn, byddai llawer o bysgod yn mynd yn sownd a byddai modd sgwpio'r pysgod lan a'u dal mewn basgedi neu rwydi neu (fel hoffwn ni eu dychmygu!) sgertiau mawr menywod. Mi fyddai wedi greu tipyn o gyffro ymhlith aelodau iau'r dorf: 'Dyma'r trai, awn ni lawr i'r trap!' Mae'r trapiau heddiw yn gartrefi clud i bob math o fywyd môr: mae cregyn, corgimychiaid, a chrancod yn llechu yn y cerrig os cymerwch chi amser i chwilio. Maent hefyd yn llefydd da i weld adar rhydio yn chwilota am fwyd.

Mae'r trap gogledd-orllewinol yn estyn allan rhywfaint tu hwnt i'r lanfa ('Fisherman's Quay') wrth ymyl Harbwr Gwdig. Gellir ei weld (pan fydd y môr allan) wrth gerdded ar hyd y ffordd tuag at derfynfa'r fferi. Ymddangosa ar siartiau'r môr o'r ddeunawfed ganrif, yn ogystal ag ar fap cyntaf yr Arolwg Ordnans ym 1889. Dinistriwyd rhan o'r trap ar ddechrau'r ugeinfed ganrif wrth adeiladu'r harbwr newydd. Bygythiwyd y gweddill gan gynllun arfaethedig i ddatblygu marina ar ddechrau'r ganrif hon, ond yn ffodus i'r trap ni ddigwyddodd hynny wedi'r cyfan.

Efallai nad yw'r pentyrrau o hen gerrig llithrig hyn yn atyniad amlwg i dwristiaid arferol heddiw – ond dylem gydnabod eu harwyddocâd. Maent y cysylltu treftadaeth forol

Abergwaun a Gwdig gyda hanes cymunedau tebyg ar draws y byd. Datblygodd pobl yr arfordir yr un syniadau, a rhannu'r un gweithgareddau tuag at yr un nod cyffredin. Rhywbeth i'w ddathlu yw hynny; a dylid gwarchod yr hen drapiau hyn gyda'r un parch a gofal ag a roddwyd i olion eraill o'r gorffennol pell.

Factoid

There are [fish traps in Australia](#) that are over 6,000 years old, older than the pyramids.

Yn [Awstralia ceir trapiau pysgod](#) sydd dros 6,000 blwydd oed, yn hŷn na'r pyramidau.

Related Resources

Fishguard Harbour Northwest Fish Trap, *Coflein Site*

Report (Archived), <https://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/407699/details/fishguard-harbour-north-west-fish-trap>

Medieval and Early Post-Medieval Fish Traps: A Threat-Related Assessment, *Dyfed Archaeological Trust*, 2012, archived at <https://perma.cc/47AL-3QWK>

Nikola Vousden, 'The Archaeological and Historical Significance of Intertidal Fish Traps at Llanon, Cardigan Bay: a west Wales case study' (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David Lampeter, 2014), archived at <https://perma.cc/K6MU-8N6N>

Monica Tan, 'The fish traps at Brewarrina are extraordinary and ancient structures. Why aren't they better protected?', *The Guardian*, 9 July 2015, archived at <https://perma.cc/9EE6-C2UJ>

Official Website