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Dublin Core

Title

The works of Richard Fenton, Part I | Gweithiau Richard Fenton, Rhan I

Subject

Richard Fenton

Antiquarianism

Fishguard

Creator

Sally Sadler

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/4W2P-J39L>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

51.99400724253843, -4.964862374298039

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

“Old Fenton ... knew everything, and when you fancy you make a discovery in Welsh Archaeology or Topography, you are sure to discover sooner or later that he had found it before you” - Introduction by Ferrar Fenton in 1903 edn., p.xxxii.

Lede (Welsh)

Story

During the 1790s Richard Fenton was busy touring his native Pembrokeshire and gathering material for his *Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire*, published in 1811 to highly positive reviews. This enormous work, beginning and ending in Fishguard, contains a great deal of information in its 587 pages and includes a map along with 75 pages of appendices. There are comments on the history of towns, villages, churches, castles and prehistoric sites he visited on his twelve *Itineraries*, alongside information on customary practices and folklore, descriptions of archaeological excavations, remarks on industrial developments, the growth of tourism and the activities and ancestry of the local gentry – several of whom were close relations. An entertaining yet in many ways idiosyncratic publication, it also contains scathing criticism of the establishment. The book was subsequently censured by Bishop Burgess of St David’s who took exception to Fenton’s comments on the virtual ruination of the See by his predecessors. Fenton’s caustic (but, wisely, unpublished) reply is still in manuscript form at the National Library of Wales.

Of the many places evoked in this tour, Fishguard itself is dealt with rather curiously. Setting out on his first journey from the port town, Fenton observes that he is saving his main description of it for the end of the tour. Heading south, however, he does give us a bracing and lyrical view of the whole bay:

Few sea prospects possess more beauty than this, for here the eye is not suffered to lose itself in a boundless expanse of ocean, but is limited to a space where every object may be distinctly measured, and from its excursions over which it never returns unsatisfied. Its sinuous coast consisting of projections endlessly varying in shape and height, and backed by a gradation of retiring distances formed by hilly and mountainous inland inequalities, exhibits an outline, though not of the grandest character considered as Pembrokeshire rocks in detail, yet unrivalled for pleasing variety and general effect.

He returns some 500 pages later to the town ‘where home and all the domestic joys that result from conjugal and parental affections, a retirement of my own creating, after absence doubly dear, await to crown my labours’. And yet here he seems reluctant, or is perhaps too exhausted, to spend a great deal of time describing it, quoting at length from an admiralty report on the harbour, and finally handing over to his son ‘a young antiquary’, whose focus remains very much on the prehistoric past. Fenton does, however, make some memorable comments on the little town’s jumbled lay-out, which even in the 1790s seems to have caused headaches for the town planners!

Fishguard, like most other places suddenly becoming large and populous, built without reference to any plan as to form or extent, and tortured to follow the direction of the few ancient houses unhappily so placed as not to be capable of falling into the ranks of any projected openings meriting the name of streets, labours under many defects that will not admit of being easily remedied from those morbid excrescences everywhere producing deformity, and in some places almost choking up the circulation.

Richard Fenton also published an edition of a Tudor *History of Pembrokeshire* and two witty satires, *A Quest in Search of Genealogy* (1811) and *Memoirs of an Old Wig* (1815), both published anonymously. The many unpublished letters and manuscripts which lie behind all these publications have a great deal still to reveal.

Story (Welsh)

Yn ystod y 1790au treuliodd Richard Fenton dipyn o amser yn teithio o gwmpas ei sir frodorol, gan gasglu deunydd ar gyfer *A Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire*, a gafodd adolygiadau canmoliaethus iawn pan gyhoeddwyd ym 1811. Mae'r llyfr anferth hwn, sydd yn dechrau ac yn bennu yn Abergwaun, yn cynnwys llwyth o wybodaeth ymysg ei 587 tudalen, yn ogystal â map, a 75 o dudalennau o atodiadau ychwanegol. Ceir sylwadau am hanes trefi a phentrefi, egwlysi, cestyll a safleoedd cynhanesyddol – llefydd ymwelodd Fenton â nhw yn ystod dwsin o *Deithiau* (*Itineraries*). Ceir hefyd gwybodaeth am ymarferion traddodiadol a llên gwerin, disgrifiadau o gloddiau archeolegol, a myfyrdodau ar ddatblygiadau diwydiannol, tŵf twristiaeth, hynafiaeth a gweithgareddau ymhlith boneddigion lleol – sawl un, wrth gwrs, yn perthyn iddo. Cyhoeddiad difyr ond eto'n unigryw, mae'n cynnwys beirniadaeth hallt o sefydliadau fel yr Eglwys. Nid oedd yr Esgob Burgess, Tŷ Ddewi, yn gwerthfawrogi sylwadau Fenton am gamgymeriadau ei ragflaenwyr yn yr Esgobaeth, ac ysgrifennodd yn danbaid yn ei erbyn. Ymatebodd Fenton yn hallt, ond, efallai yn gall am unwaith, arosodd ei feddyliau mewn llawysgrif yn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru.

O'r llefydd niferus sy'n ymddangos yn y daith hon, mae Abergwaun ei hun yn cael ei thrin mewn ffordd sydd braidd yn rhyfeddol. Wrth iddo gychwyn o'r borthladd ar ddechrau'r llyfr, awgryma Fenton ei fod yn cadw disgrifiad manwl ohoni tan ddiwedd y daith. Gan droi am y ffordd i Dŷ Ddewi, mae'n tynnu darlun ysbrydoledig a thelynegol o'r bae cyfan:

Few sea prospects possess more beauty than this, for here the eye is not suffered to lose itself in a boundless expanse of ocean, but is limited to a space where every object may be distinctly measured, and from its excursions over which it never returns unsatisfied. Its sinuous coast consisting of projections endlessly varying in shape and height, and backed by a gradation of retiring distances formed by hilly and mountainous inland inequalities, exhibits an outline, though not of the grandest character considered as Pembrokeshire rocks in detail, yet unrivalled for pleasing variety and general effect.

Wrth iddo ddychwelyd i'r dre rhyw 500 tudalen yn ddiweddarach, mae'n ymhyfrydu wrth feddwl am 'home and all the domestic joys that result from conjugal and parental affections' ac 'a retirement of my own creating, after absence doubly dear' sydd yn aros amdano. Ac eto, mae'n ymddangos yn gyndyn – neu efallai yn rhy flinedig – i dreulio llawer o amser yn disgrifio'r dref ei hun. Mae'n dyfynnu'n hir o adroddiad gan yr Admiraliaeth ar yr harbwr, ac yn cloi ei lyfr trwy basio'r naratif draw i'w fab ei hun, 'a young antiquary', sy'n cadw'r ffocws ar safleoedd cynhanesyddol. Wedi dweud hynny, ceir rhai sylwadau ffraeth am ddiffyg dylunio'r dre fach a oedd - hyd yn oed yn y 1790au – yn achosi pen tost i gynllunwyr!

Fishguard, like most other places suddenly becoming large and populous, built without reference to any plan as to form or extent, and tortured to follow the direction of the few

ancient houses unhappily so placed as not to be capable of falling into the ranks of any projected openings meriting the name of streets, labours under many defects that will not admit of being easily remedied from those morbid excrescences everywhere producing deformity, and in some places almost choaking up the circulation.

Yn ogystal, cyhoeddod Richard Fenton olygiad hanesyddol pwysig Tuduraidd, sef *A History of Pembrokeshire* gan George Owen, a dau destun dychanol, *A Quest in Search of Genealogy* (1811) and *Memoirs of an Old Wig* (1815), y ddau yn ddiennw. Erys llawer i'w ddarganfod am waith, bywyd a chysylltiadau Fenton ymhlith yr ohebiaeth a llawysgrifau niferus sydd heb eu cyhoeddi o hyd.

Factoid

Related Resources

Dillwyn Miles, 'Richard Fenton, Pembrokeshire Historian 1747-1821', *The Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society* (1997, Vol. 7), <http://hdl.handle.net/10107/1166483>

Official Website

Sally Sadler is a doctoral research student working on Fenton at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies: contact canolfan@cymru.ac.uk.