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Dublin Core

Title

Women and the Ireland-Wales Crossing | Merched yn croesi rhwng Iwerddon a Chymru

Subject

Women

Menywod

Irish Sea Crossing

Taith drosodd Môr Iwerddon

Narratives

Adroddiadau

Creator

Elizabeth Edwards

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/7BCV-32ER>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

53.34520735667796, -5.369447547193744

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Women's voices form a distinct strand within the stories of port communities. Often buried in private letters or unpublished journals, these voices aren't always easy to hear today.

Lede (Welsh)

Mae lleisiau merched yn ffurfio cainc bwysig ymhlith straeon cymunedau'r porthladdoedd. Yn aml iawn maent yn cuddio mewn llythyrau personol, neu ddyddiaduron heb eu cyhoeddi, ac nid yw'r lleisiau hyn wastad yn hawdd i'w clywed heddiw.

Story

When Mary Wollstonecraft crossed from Holyhead to Dublin – ‘the best and shortest passage’, she noted – in October 1786, she was lucky. ‘[T]he weather was fine the prospects delightful’, she wrote in a letter to Eliza Bishop, looking back on the voyage, during which she met ‘a young Clergyman’ (probably Rev. Henry Gabell) also heading to begin tutoring work in Ireland, and ‘was in company with’ Arthur James Plunkett (Lord Fingall), a prominent Catholic peer opposed to the movement for Irish independence. Testament, perhaps, to the ‘sea of thoughts’ (original emphasis) she described herself as ‘lost in’ during this journey, Wollstonecraft concludes on a barbed note: ‘I would sooner tell you a tale of some humbler creatures ... I shall make a point of finding them out’. The line of travel may be one of hard-won insight: ‘the gift / of knowing where your own knowing ends’.

Conditions during crossings could be challenging in a variety of ways. We know that sea travel in the period was often difficult, uncomfortable and dangerous. Anne Plumptre gives us a tantalising glimpse of the state of travel for women in her 1817 *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland*, observing that ‘very little attention is paid in general to the accommodation of female passengers’. It's not clear exactly what she means here, but she goes on to reveal that women at sea sometimes prepared travelling comforts that went beyond physical surroundings. ‘I had made a little provision of food for the mind’, she writes, ‘and had put up some books with my other sea stores: among these was Lady Morgan's excellent novel of *O'Donnel*. – As I was going to visit a part of Ireland admirably described in this work, the county of Antrim, and had besides a letter of introduction to the amiable authoress at Dublin, it received great additional interest from being read as I was crossing the Irish Channel.’ Sydney Owenson's (Lady Morgan) *O'Donnel* (1814), a national tale-related work that explores themes of Irish ‘improvement’ (particularly in infrastructural terms) and identity, isn't widely read today. But it's interesting that Plumptre was using it as a form of research ahead of her Irish stay – not so much a sea of ideas, but ideas on the sea, perhaps.

The ships serving the Irish Sea routes were clearly impressive vessels. In 1797, the novelist and travel writer Catherine Hutton described them like this:

The packets from Holyhead to Dublin are fine sloops of 70 tons burthen. I saw one at Caernarvon, wainscoted with mahogany, elegantly fitted up and furnished. They can carry a hundred persons each, but they only have sixteen beds. They are each allowed fourteen hands, though four would be sufficient to navigate the vessel. They are fast sailors, and will live in any sea, provided they have room.

When it wasn't dull or just uncomfortable, travel could be all too interesting – emotionally draining or painful as well as physically dangerous. In 1802, Mary Anne Eade made a different kind of prayer to the horizon when contemplating her journey from Anglesey to Dublin. Thinking of her little boy at home in London, and worrying that she might never see him again, Eade links her anxious state of mind with the harp music she's listening to at a Welsh inn:

my mind during this interval naturally dwelt on all those dear friends from whom the boundless ocean was so soon to separate me, to separate me indeed for but a very short time, but the idea of having the rolling sea between us was so new & so strange as to appear to me quite frightful; with this idea in my head I fancied the air in question seemed to correspond with my feelings, & that it lamented the pain of an approaching exile; I was induced to ask the harper the name of it, & found by his answer that the music had spoken truly, for it was a song made on the commencement of a long journey & began with a farewell to the friends whom the traveller was about to leave.

She was right to be cautious. After a stay in Dublin and a tour of Wicklow, Eade returns to Holyhead, narrowly escaping injury when, within sight of the port, part of the mast collapses: soon after the Head faintly appeared in the horizon

... a sudden crash over our heads fearfully reminded us we were not yet secure of obtaining it: this proceeded from the fall of our topmast, which a sudden squall took compleatly [sic] in half, happily the rigging prevented its falling quite down, or probably my head would have received it & my dear little boy been obliged to find in you a mother, as well as an aunt...

Story (Welsh)

Ym mis Hydref 1786 pan groesodd Mary Wollstonecraft o Gaergybi i Ddulyn – ‘the best and shortest passage’, fel y sylwodd – buodd hi'n ffodus. ‘[T]he weather was fine the prospects delightful’, ysgrifennodd mewn llythyr at Eliza Bishop, gan edrych yn ôl ar y fordaith, pryd y daeth i adnabod ‘a young Clergyman’ (mwy na thebyg Y Parch. Henry Gabell) oedd hefyd ar ei ffordd i gychwyn gwaith fel tiwtor yn Iwerddon, ac roedd ‘in company with’ Arthur James Plunkett (Lord Fingall), arglwydd Catholig blaengar, a wrthwynebai annibyniaeth i Iwerddon. Gan gyfeirio, efallai, at natur y ‘sea of thoughts’ a ymgollodd hi ynddo yn ystod y daith hon, gorffennodd dan ddweud, yn fwy pigog: ‘I would sooner tell you a tale of some humbler creatures ... I shall make a point of finding them out’. Mae'r llinell daith hefyd, efallai, yn cynnwys elfen o fewnwelediad: ‘the gift / of knowing where your own knowing ends’.

Roedd y croesiadau hyn yn heriol mewn sawl ffordd. Gwyddys am anhawsterau teithio ar y môr yn ystod y cyfnod — pa mor anghyfforddus a pheryglus y gallai fod. Ym 1817 cawn gipolwg gogleisiol gan Anne Plumtre o gyflwr teithio i fenywod: yn ei *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland* sylwai ‘very little attention is paid in general to the accommodation of female passengers’. Nid yw hi'n egluro ryw lawer am hyn, ond mae hi'n dangos wedyn sut oedd menywod yn medru paratoi cysur ar gyfer teithio oedd y tu hwnt i rai corfforol. ‘I had made a little provision of food for the mind’, meddai, ‘and had put up some books with my other sea stores: among these was Lady Morgan’s excellent novel of O’Donnel. – As I was going to visit a part of Ireland admirably described in this work, the county of Antrim, and had besides a letter of introduction to the amiable authoress at Dublin, it received great

additional interest from being read as I was crossing the Irish Channel.’ Ni ddarllenir *O’Donnel* (1814), gan Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) yn aml iawn heddiw – mae’n nofel sy’n archwilio themau gwelliannau cymdeithas Iwerddon (yn enwedig rhai sydd yn ymwneud ag isadeiledd y wlad). Ond mae’n ddiddorol gweld Plumptre yn ei defnyddio fel rhyw fath o ymchwil cyn ei chyfnod yn Iwerddon. Dim ‘môr o syniadau’ gymaint â ‘syniadau ar y môr’, efallai.

Creodd y llongau post oedd yn gwasanaethu croesiadau Môr Iwerddon argraff fawr ar y nofelydd ac awdur ysgrifau teithio Catherine Hutton ym 1797:

The packets from Holyhead to Dublin are fine sloops of 70 tons burthen. I saw one at Caernarvon, wainscoted with mahogany, elegantly fitted up and furnished. They can carry a hundred persons each, but they only have sixteen beds. They are each allowed fourteen hands, though four would be sufficient to navigate the vessel. They are fast sailors, and will live in any sea, provided they have room.

Pan nad oedd yn ddiflas neu’n anghyfforddus, gallai teithio fod weithiau yn *rhy* ddiddorol – yn lluddedus, neu hyd yn oed yn beryglus. Cynigiodd Mary Anne Eade weddi arbennig i’r gorwel, wrth iddi ystyried ei thaith o Ynys Môn i Ddulyn. Gan feddwl am ei bachgen bach gartref, a phoeni na fyddai’n ei weld eto, cysylltodd Eade ei phryder meddwl gyda’r gerddoriaeth delyn roedd hi’n gwrando arni mewn tafarn Gymreig:

my mind during this interval naturally dwelt on all those dear friends from whom the boundless ocean was so soon to separate me, to separate me indeed for but a very short time, but the idea of having the rolling sea between us was so new & so strange as to appear to me quite frightful; with this idea in my head I fancied the air in question seemed to correspond with my feelings, & that it lamented the pain of an approaching exile; I was induced to ask the harper the name of it, & found by his answer that the music had spoken truly, for it was a song made on the commencement of a long journey & began with a farewell to the friends whom the traveller was about to leave.

Roedd hi’n iawn i bryderu. Ar ôl aros yn Nulyn a theithio o gwmpas Wicklow, dychwelodd Eade i Gaergybi. Gyda’r porthladd o fewn golwg, bu bron a chael damwain ddifrifol wrth i ddarn o’r hwylybren chwalu. Yn fuan ar ôl i Ben Caergybi ymddangos ar y gorwel...

... a sudden crash over our heads fearfully reminded us we were not yet secure of obtaining it: this proceeded from the fall of our topmast, which a sudden squall took compleatly [sic] in half, happily the rigging prevented its falling quite down, or probably my head would have received it & my dear little boy been obliged to find in you a mother, as well as an aunt...

Factoid

Tour journals were kept to be shared later with family and friends. Mary Anne Eade's 1802 trip to Ireland was written with her younger sister, Eliza Vaux (b. 1780), in mind, in response to Eliza's tour of south Wales (now lost).

Yn aml iawn cadwyd cofnod o deithau i’w rhannu’n ddiweddarach gyda theulu a ffrindiau. Cofnododd Mary Ann Eade ei thaith i Iwerddon ar gyfer ei chwaer iau Eliza Vaux (g.1780), fel ymateb i daith Eliza yn ne Cymru (llawysgrif sydd bellach ar goll).

Anne Plumptre's *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland* reads like a visitor's guide to Dublin, including institutions such as the Royal Irish Academy, the Custom House, Marsh’s Library, Trinity College and the Four Courts.

Mae *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland* gan Anne Plumptre yn darllen fel taithlyfr i ymwelwyr i Ddulyn, gan gynnwys disgrifiadau o sefydliadau megis yr Academi Frenhinol Iwerddon, y Dollfa, Llyfrgell Marsh, Coleg y Drindod a’r Pedwar Llys.

Related Resources

For a recent discussion of the novel by Nicola Lloyd, see ‘Canals, Commerce and the Construction of Nation in Sydney Owenson’s *O’Donnell*’, *Romantic Textualities* 22 (2017), archived at <https://perma.cc/FR4L-6H7H>

Catherine Hutton’s *Tours of Wales 1796-1800* will shortly appear (edited by Mary-Ann Constantine) as part of the ‘Curious Travellers’ online edition of Welsh and Scottish manuscript tours; see archived at <https://perma.cc/HS2G-QCC6>

For the full text of Mary Anne Eade’s 1802 Welsh tour, see archived at <https://perma.cc/Q74W-MYY7>

Anne Plumptre, *Narrative of a residence in Ireland during the Summer of 1814, and that of 1815*, archived at <https://perma.cc/KN9Y-H2C9>

Official Website