Ports, Past and Present

Stories of the Irish Sea

The Irish Sea basin forms a distinct network of histories, economies, and identities. Discover five Celtic port towns in Wales and Ireland that are connected and intertwined by the ferry routes that serve them: Holyhead, Fishguard, Pembroke Dock, Rosslare Harbour and Dublin Port. To get to know the landscape and the history, we hear from the people in the know. We meet up with several local characters and hear of their passion for the heritage and how their love for the place they call home is shaping the future.

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Ports, Past and Present Stories of the Irish Sea

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Edited by

Rita Singer, Peter Merriman & Rhys Jones

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Department of Geography and Earth Sciences
Aberystwyth University
Aberystwyth
2023

Gwireddu potensial diwylliannol porthladdoedd yng Nghymru ac Iwerddon

Realising the cultural potential of Irish and Welsh ports

Noddir prosiect Porthladdoedd, Ddoe a Heddiw gan Gronfa Datblygu Rhanbarthol Ewrop trwy Raglen Iwerddon Cymru.

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An inside view of typical lobster traps used around the Irish Sea.

Introduction

Rita Singer

To many a mind, seas divide countries and people and pose inconvenient obstacles. For centuries, mariners and travellers alike were at the mercy of wind and weather, not only if they wanted to cross oceans, but also considerably smaller bodies of water such as the Irish Sea. However, the Irish Sea intimately links the histories and cultures of Ireland and Wales since time immemorial.

During the long age of sailing, the steady westerly winds made east-bound crossings from Ireland comparatively easy, while on the other side of the water, ships and travellers could become stuck and unable to leave Welsh ports because the blustery weather held them trapped. On a particularly memorable four-days' delay in 1727, Jonathan Swift, attempting to return home to Dublin, transformed his frustrations into verse, complaining, 'Lo here I sit at Holy Head, / With muddy ale and mouldy bread: / I'm fastened both by wind and tide, / I see the ships at anchor ride. / All Christian vittals stink of fish, / I'm where my enemies would wish.'

Since the advent of steam, taking the boat and making that crossing has become a much more reliable experience. Not only did it allow ships to travel in unfavourable winds, but steam-powered engines increased the speed of travel considerably. Whereas before it could sometimes take three days to reach Ireland, the first steam packet boats operating in the 1820s between Wales and Ireland could undertake the same journey in under half a day.

The desire to cross the Irish Sea has rippled through the centuries. This new reliability of the motorised service, however, also changed modern travellers' attitudes towards port towns and their communities. With every new generation of stronger, faster and more dependable ships, the Welsh and Irish ferry port towns around the Irish Sea transformed from stopping points into throughways. They are now places to 'catch the ferry' or 'get off the ferry,' and no longer locations for rest and discovery.

With this book, we hope to play our part in changing this perception of ports as thoroughfares and encourage travellers to slow down, step off and explore the surroundings of Holyhead, Fishguard and Goodwick, Pembroke Dock, Rosslare Harbour and Dublin Port. To get to know the landscape and the history, we met local characters and listened to them speak with passion about local heritage and how a love for the place they call home is shaping the future.

In these stories, we hear of French invasions, first flights across the Irish Sea, Japanese ginkgo trees, secret gardens, one-eyed captains and their pet-ravens, and of the good craic in a dockers' pub on a Friday night. We follow the ferries as they criss-cross the Irish Sea and hear of the fascinating lives of wild sea birds, family links across two countries, and how

through the centuries, ships have provided a lifeline for the Irish and Welsh communities situated at the water's edge. The blend of characteristic voices and the striking visuals of Welsh and Irish landscapes almost make you hear the sound of the sea, coast and bustling ports.

The stories and images collected in this book all originated from our eight-part documentary series on YouTube about five Celtic port towns in Wales and Ireland that are connected and intertwined by the ferry routes that serve them. In each book section, you will find QR codes which will take you to one of these short films. Simply use your smart device to scan each code.

If our stories and films have whetted your appetite and you are now itching to explore the communities and their surroundings, our free app for Android or Apple phones will help you. In several themed experiences, you can undertake self-guided tours through Holyhead, Fishguard and Goodwick, Pembroke Dock, Rosslare Harbour and Dublin Port. If you are restricted with your time, you can discover a great variety of heritage stories on shorter walks through the streets and nearby countryside. We even have your ferry journey covered with stories placed along the route! Every time you approach a story point, you will receive a notification that something noteworthy happened close by.

So step off that boat and discover the rich and varied history and heritage of the Irish Sea through our unique offer that blends storytelling, images, sound and video.

Port Places App
for Android devices

Port Places App
for Apple devices

View from Fishguard Lower Town across the bay towards a Stena ferry docked at Fishguard and Goodwick harbour during high tide.

Fishguard

Aerial view of Fishguard Bay with Fishguard in the foreground and Goodwick in the background.

An aerial view of Fishguard Lower Town during spring.

Fishguard is a coastal town in north Pembrokeshire, overlooking Cardigan Bay. Its name in Welsh, Abergwaun, reflects its position at the mouth of the Gwaun river; its name in English derives from the Old Norse Fiskigarðr – 'fish catching enclosure' – and reveals the town's long history as a trading port. Goods such as limestone, coal, slate, wool and foodstuffs all passed through its harbour.

The prosperity of the port attracted the attention of raiders: in 1779, the privateer *Black Prince* captured a local ship, demanding £1,000 ransom. When the townspeople refused to pay up, the privateer's crew bombarded Fishguard, damaging local houses and St Mary's Church, which was subsequently renovated and is home to some fine stained glass windows. Castle Point Old Fort was built in response to this episode: it was from here that the Welsh are said to have fired cannons at French forces during the so-called Last Invasion of Britain in February 1797. Led by the Irish-American William Tate, the French Légion Noire landed at Carreg Wastad Point on 22 February. They were about 1,400 strong, but badly organized, and surrendered unconditionally on Goodwick Sands on the third day. Two hundred years later, these events were commemorated in a 100-foot long tapestry created by the community, now displayed in the Town Hall.

As the old port declined in the nineteenth century, with improvements to the railway connection completed by 1906, transatlantic liners such as the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania* began landing in the new harbour at nearby Goodwick (Wdig) by 1909 from where Stena Line now runs its passenger service to Rosslare Harbour. Fishguard was also home to the Welsh writer and a co-founder of Plaid Cymru D. J. Williams (1885-1970), and the picturesque quayside at Lower Town famously featured in the films *Moby Dick* (1956) and *Under Milk Wood* (1972).

The historic Royal Oak pub in Fishguard where officers of the invading French army signed the treaty of surrender in 1797.

A typical view of Pembrokeshire's rocky coastline.

An aerial view from the Parrog towards Fishguard

Birdseye view of a street in Goodwick, the village situated immediately above the ferry port.

Welcome to the *Mauretania*

J. D. Symmonds

Thrice welcome, *Mauretania*,
We hail thee, kindly seer,
Who speaks of Fishguard's future
In accents loud and clear;
From down the midnight shadows
Where towns have not a name,
She mounts up now to noonday
Among the ports of fame.

Thrice welcome, *Mauretania*,
May angels round thee glide
To convoy every passage
Safe o'er Atlantic's tide;
Wind, wave, mist, fire and lightning,
I urge you, one and all,
That to this queen of vessels
You cause no harm to fall.

Thrice welcome, *Mauretania*,
Thy bulk tames Ocean's frown,
The far West at our elbow
Thy magic speed brings down
What four full moons of sailing
Could achieve before;
Four days can now the distance
Bridge quite from shore to shore.

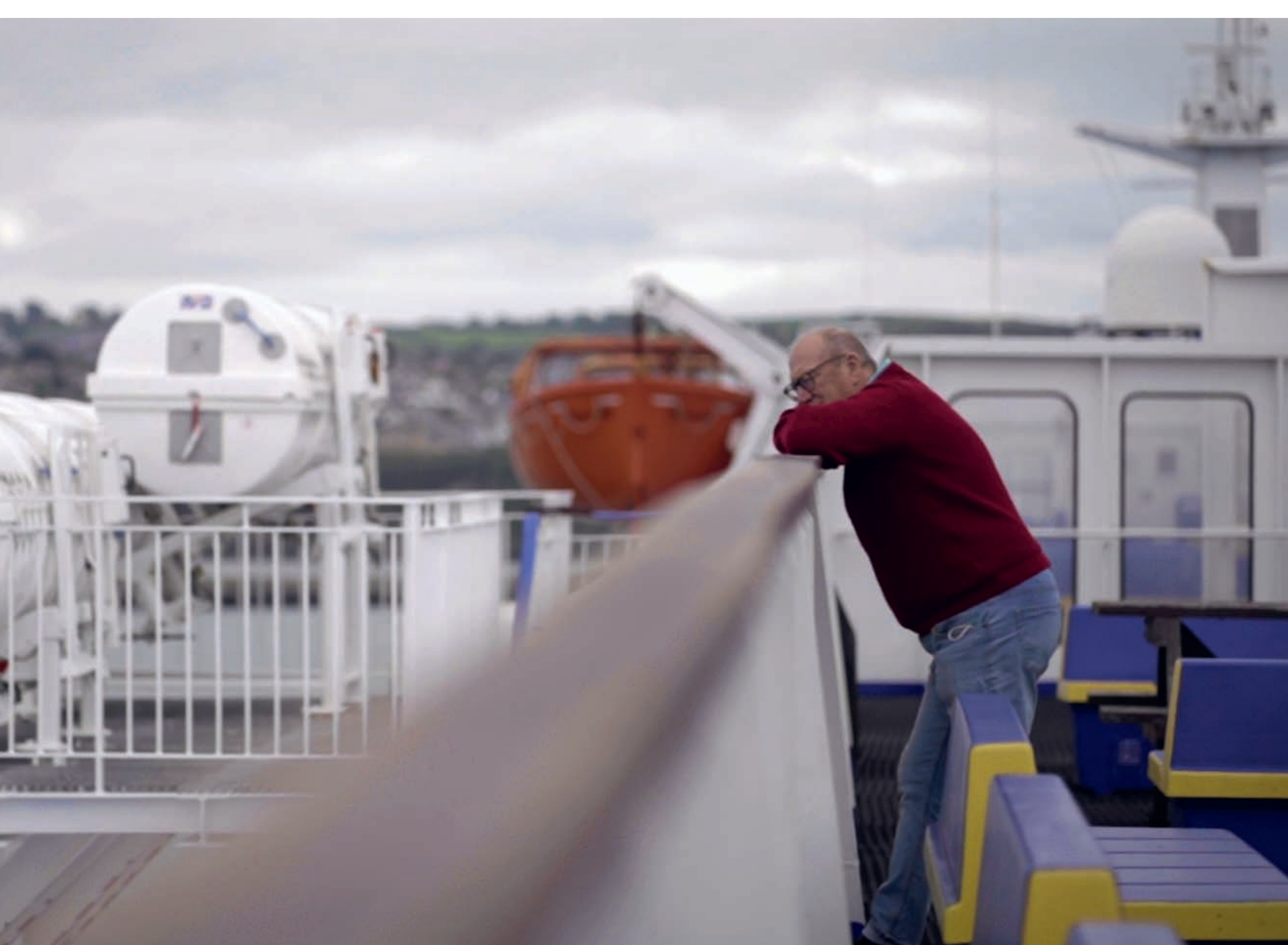
Thrice welcome, *Mauretania*,
And to the Captain bold,
Dame Wales is proud to own him—
A Welshman, good as gold;
All praise to such a hero
Whose inner shoulder keeps
A load so huge and heavy
Above the yawning deeps.

We honour both great parties
Who had the word to say,
That ope'd the gate to enter
Upon this happy day;
Great Western and Cunarder,
May these henceforth agree,
While trains move over metals,
While liners plough the sea.

Fishguard, August, 1909

Looking westward past the lighthouse on Strumble Head as a ferry from Fishguard and Goodwick passes on the horizon on its way to Rosslare Harbour.

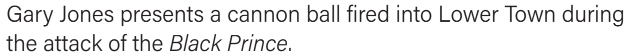
Passengers on a ferry from Fishguard and Goodwick to Rosslare Harbour.



Gary Jones

Gary Jones, Fishguard Lower Town

It is an odd thing to have in my pocket, but it came from a pirate ship in 1779. The *Black Prince* stayed on the end of Fishguard harbour and fired its cannon into the town with the idea of getting the town to pay them money. The town wouldn't and one of these cannon balls lodged in a chimney in one of the pubs in town. The locals borrowed a cannon from a ship which was in the harbour. They brought it up to this place so they could fire down onto the pirates and so the pirates immediately turned tail and went. Because of the pirate attack, the town asked the government for cannons and those four big cannons over there were provided for the town to protect itself from pirates.



Gary Jones presents a cannon ball fired into Lower Town during the attack of the *Black Prince*.

Fishguard Fort, which was equipped with four cannons following the attack by the *Black Prince* on the town.

A view of Fishguard Lower Town from near the Gorsedd stone circle dating from the 1936 National Eisteddfod.

Jana Davidson

Jana Davidson in her artist studio

During the Last Invasion, our heroine, Jemima Nicholas, saw a lot of these drunken French soldiers and went down with her pitchfork and she rounded them up, marched them back up this hill into Fishguard. And then when they surrendered, they took them back down to Goodwick. On the bicentenary of the Invasion, Elizabeth Cramp was asked to make a commemorative tapestry. So she designed it and a whole army of local ladies did all this stitching. The tapestry depicts the whole event from when the French invaded right the way through to Jemima and the treaty being signed at the Royal Oak. It's quite an important piece of local history that we're really proud of and a great source of inspiration to the local creatives and community generally.

Jana Davidson pays a visit to the French Invasion Tapestry on display in Fishguard Town Hall. The tapestry was designed by Elizabeth Cramp for the bicentenary celebrations in 1997 and took four years to complete.

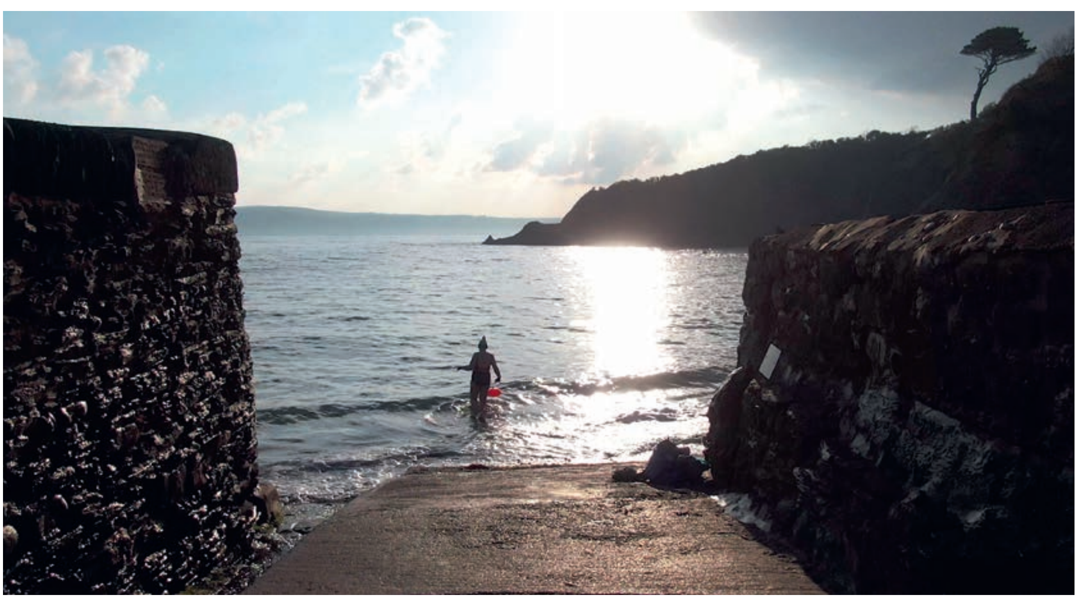
Jackie Jones

Jackie Jones, intrepid sea swimmer in all temperatures.

We're at Cwm-yr-Eglwys and it's just a really beautiful little bay which is quite well known for the church ruin that's only just standing. There's only one wall left of the old St Brynach's Church. There was a big storm back in 1859 and lots of boats were lost out at sea. One of the ships was the *Royal Charter* which was lost off north Wales after which the storm was later named. But lots of boats were also lost off the west Wales coast and the storm destroyed this church. So the remains are here now. It's a really scenic place to come and swim.

Enjoying a relaxing BBQ on Cwm-yr-Eglwys beach.

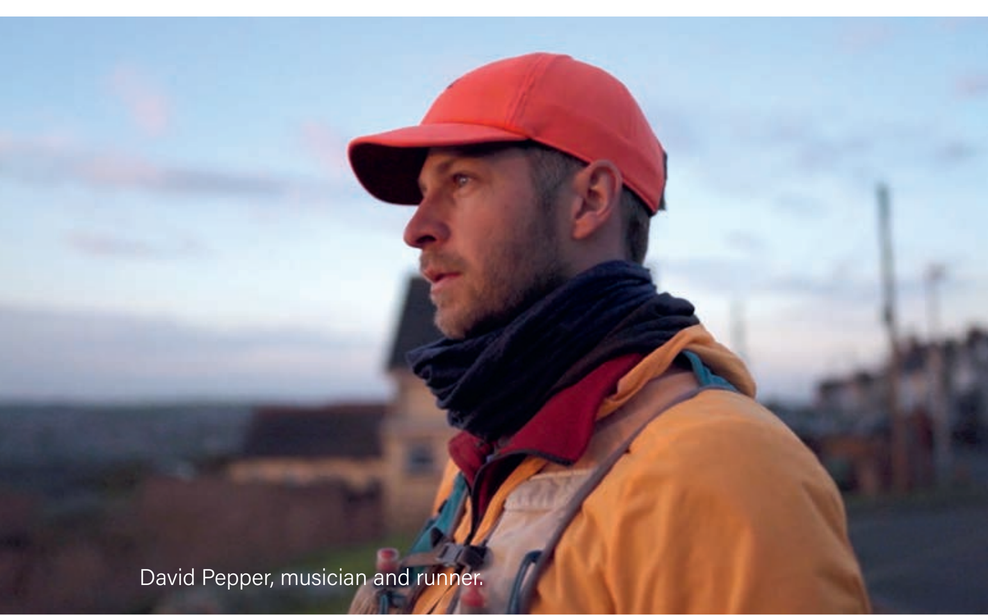
Aerial view of Ynys Dinas (Dinas Island).



For wild swimmer Jackie Jones, the sheltered cove at Cwm-yr-Eglwys offers one of the best spots for swimming in the sea.

The ruins of St Brynach's Church are located immediately on the waterfront at Cwm-yr-Eglwys.

David Pepper



David Pepper, musician and runner.

We're here by the field from where the first flight to Ireland was achieved by Dennis Corbett Wilson in 1912. He set off from here early one morning, probably just going out to the Preselis there, turning to the left and then following the ferry loop over to Rosslare Harbour and on to Enniscorthy, crashlanding and hitting a stone wall. Quite a celebrity thing to do back in the day. There's always been a sense of journeying in this area, of people arriving and taking off to new destinations.

View from Goodwick harbour village across Fishguard Bay at sunrise.

Goodwick Beach Breakwater reaching out into the bay is an accessible location for walking and running.

Marine Walk, Fishguard Lower Town.

The memorial plaque near Penrhiw Farm above Goodwick commemorating the first successful motorised flight from Wales to Ireland.

Hedydd Hughes

Gary Jones and Hedydd Hughes playing folk tunes.

Mae diddordeb 'da fi i greu adnoddau, i weithio rhywbeth mas o ddim byd, os gallai, er mwyn adrodd straeon yr ardal i blant lleol, oherwydd mae'n eu treftadaeth nhw. Byddai'n gas 'da fi i feddwl bod plant lleol yn gadael yr ysgol heb wybod stori'r Ffrancwr a Jemima, am stori Dewi Sant, am stori llongddrylliad y *Salus* neu straeon Shemi Wâd. Maen nhw i gyd yn rhoi lliw i'n hardal ni, ac yn rhoi hunaniaeth i ni. Mae trio rhoi ryw syniad o hanes lleol a chwedlau'r ardal a rhyw ymwybyddiaeth eu gwreiddiau i blant yn yr ysgol yn bwysig i fi. Dwi'n teimlo fe yn y galon.

A traditional Welsh farm situated on the Pencaer Peninsula to the west of Fishguard and Goodwick.

I have an interest in making storytelling resources, to create something out of nothing, if I can, to tell local stories to local children, because that is their heritage. It would be a real shame if local children left school without learning the story about the French soldiers and Jemima, the story of St. David, the story of the *Salus* shipwreck or the tales of Shemi Wâd. They all give colour to our local area and give us our identity. Trying to instil an understanding of local history and legends and some consciousness for their roots in the school children is important to me. I feel it in my heart.

Hedydd Hughes playing the 'squeeze box' as the Mari Lwyd looks on. The Mari Lwyd is a decorated horse skull used in processions as part of a Christmas and new year folk tradition that originally formed in south Wales in the eighteenth century.

Hedydd tells the stories about St David, a French soldier and Jemima Nicholas with the help of her own, hand-made ragdolls.

Collected, hand-written stories about Shemi Wâd, a local folk hero and main character in many tall tales.

Margaret Todd

The Todd family photo album

When I was about nineteen, I went to work on the ferries. I joined the ships from 1961 to 1965. We weren't home much at all then, but lived on the ship really. We just got home Sunday nights and had to be back down on the ship Monday morning. My connection with Rosslare was through my father who was over there and my grandfather. They were born there. My father moved over here to Goodwick, but then he went back to Ireland. My grandfather lived in Ireland all his life. I met my Irish husband, Leo Todd, on the *St David* when he decided to come back for the season and work on the ferries.

Aerial view of Goodwick and the ferry port.

SCAN ME

Margaret Todd shares her photographs from the time she worked as a stewardess on the ferries between Fishguard and Rosslare Harbour.

Margaret Todd with two of her daughters, Elizabeth (left) and Julie (right).

Margaret and Chief Steward Yori Davies on one of the ferries between Fishguard and Rosslare Harbour.

Elizabeth Todd-Parker

Obviously the Rosslare and Fishguard ports developed because of that desire to link southern Ireland with London, their whole purpose is for that. And that caused a mingling of the populations. Just thinking back to when we were in primary school, the Catholic church and the Catholic school in Fishguard were largely created because of that Irish population. When we were in school, there would be many people with parents or grandparents who were Irish, but you'd always see yourself as Welsh. I'm very proud of my Irish heritage, but I would always class myself as Welsh. I think those traditions just blended. I remember we had nuns teaching us and they taught us Irish dancing, but also Welsh folk dancing.

Left to right: Julie Todd, Elizabeth Todd-Parker, Margaret Todd.

A view of Fishguard Bay from Goodwick harbour village.

View of the quayside as the ferry departs.

Looking back towards Fishguard Bay.

Rosslare Europort.

Rosslare Harbour

Rosslare Europort.

The ferry for Pembroke Dock departs.

Rosslare Harbour, or Cuan Ros Láir in Irish, meaning 'harbour of the middle peninsula', sits on the south-east corner of Ireland, a suitable location for marine connections with Wales and Europe.

Nearby Wexford and New Ross had been the maritime centres of the region since the Middle Ages. The history of Rosslare's harbour village begins relatively recently with changing geographical and transport systems which brought about the creation of the new harbour, although the area has previously had a rich maritime association. An RNLI station has been in operation since 1838 and the much older Rosslare Fort used to guard Wexford Harbour. The fort was eventually abandoned to the sea in 1925, although its remains have occasionally surfaced in recent years.

The advent of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century transformed the way goods and people moved, enabling new connections to be created within Ireland and across the Irish Sea. It is due to these developments that the port developed. In the 1890s, the Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Company was set up. It was a joint venture between the British Great Western Railway and the Irish Great Southern & Western Railway and created an integrated rail and ferry system generating new commercial, migration, and tourism routes. Rosslare Harbour village developed around this new port supporting the new waves of traffic.

The increasing popularity of cars and trucks in the 1940s and '50s furthered Rosslare Harbour's role as a vital node for international transport to and from Ireland. In 1968, the port became Ireland's newest gateway to Europe with the opening of the Le Havre ferry route. While low-fares airlines have impacted the sector, goods transport and seasonal tourism have ensured that Rosslare Europort is now the second busiest port in the Republic of Ireland.

On Rosslare Harbour beach.

Next stop, Wales.

The Small Boat Harbour at Rosslare Harbour.

Sandpipers at Rosslare

Bernard O'Donohue

The standard procedure is to fill up
with petrol just past the long scenic drop
down into Dungarvan, to drop the bags
at the Rosslare Lodge and drive to the beach
behind the Ferryport where our boat is
all business, preparing to set off.
It will reach Wales and then cross back for us
to embark in the morning. As the twilight
deepens, the on-off of the Tuskar Light
finds its range; we are watching a stonechat
swaying precariously on its perch.
At the water's edge a small flock of sandpipers
is pattering to and fro, letting us almost
catch up, then shrilling off in a sparkling v
of flight to settle on a new ridge of sand,
fifty yards ahead. This is where they live;
it's where they will be when we next start out
from this same perfect point of departure.

One of the four-legged inhabitants of Hazelwood Stables.

Lobster traps.

A colony of grey seals near Raven Point.

Raven Nature
Reserve.

Agnes Ferguson

I go to visit my family in Fishguard very regularly. We go to them and they come to us. We're very close, really. Taking the ferry from Rosslare to Fishguard, you go on board and then you go into duty-free and have a few drinks in the bar and something to eat. It's really part and parcel of a trip, of a holiday. It's what you make of it, I suppose, like everything. Then you arrive at Strumble Head Lighthouse and then you see Fishguard and arrive in the harbour and Goodwick. It feels the same as being home, really. I love the sea. I leave Rosslare and it seems I get light in the head. I first met Michael, my husband, on the ferry going to Fishguard. I was going over to my niece's christening and I met him and somebody introduced us.

A Welsh-Irish family reunion between the Todds and the Fergusons.

Margaret Todd visits Agnes Ferguson, her Irish sister-in-law.

Agnes Ferguson and her daughter, Lisa.

Agnes Ferguson and colleagues from the Irish Tourist Information in the 1960s.

Strumble Head Lighthouse.

Leo Coy

Leo Coy, local historian and maritime heritage expert.

I was born and bred in Rosslare Harbour. My memories are all about the pier and the ships and the fishing boats and the people who worked on the pier. My father worked all his life on the pier for British Rail. The original entrance to the harbour was by a viaduct and it had two railway lines in the middle, a pedestrian walkway on the right and a cattle grid on the left. The cattle used to be assembled outside the harbour and went out along the cattle walk and straight onto the ships for export.

Marian shrine from 1954, situated on the Rosslare Harbour coastal walk just above the ferry port.

Rosslare Europort.

One of the remaining pill boxes above Rosslare Harbour beach from Second World War. While Ireland did not participate in the war, pill boxes such as this one were part of the country's coastal defence against German invasion.

Aerial view of Rosslare Harbour beach looking towards the ferry port.

Madeleine Quirke

The spirit of volunteerism in Rosslare Harbour is amazing. When you walk around here you see we have our memorial park, we have lovely trails along the top of the bank. These are all the result of the community getting together. About thirty years ago, Kirwan's garden backed onto another abandoned area and he just started pottering away and took an interest in trying to sort it out. Over the years, it has just developed and, I'd say about fifteen years ago, the local environment group became interested. They have a band of people now who work here probably on a daily basis and have developed the paths and introduced new shrubs and flowers. It has been transformed into what has become a tourism attraction for Rosslare Harbour.

Madeleine Quirke visiting the secret garden.

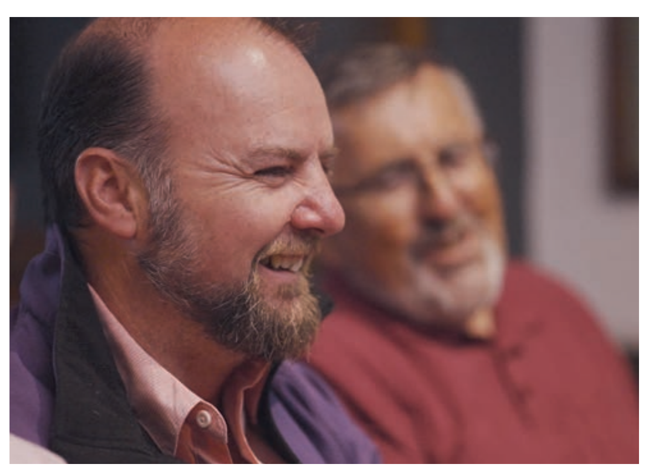
Rosslare Harbour

Padraig and Madeline Quirke at the entrance to Kirwan's Garden.

A hidden gem in Rosslare Harbour: Kirwan's Secret Garden.

Rosslare Harbour coastal path above the beach offers accessible walks and great views of the coast.

Adrian Tennant



I'm from Wexford and I know this area very well. I grew up here. Here in Wexford, we have a track record of welcoming people into our community particularly around Rosslare, not just because of the port, but because of the history of the place. Diversity is something with which we grow up here in Wexford. We're in an ancient barony called Forth and there's another barony right next to us called Bargy, and Forth and Bargy were in the Wexford Pale. When the Normans came in 1169, the area was settled. So we had from that time Flemings, English, Welsh, French, Dutch and Friesans all living in this area.

Aerial view from Tagoat towards Rosslare Europort.

Young adventure camp visitors receiving instructions on how to build a fully functional raft out of empty plastic barrels, spare timber and rope.

Jack Murphy

Jack Murphy at his surf school in Curracloe.

I think the river Slaney and the fact that we're just that little bit more south in Ireland creates that little bit of a micro-climate. When we do get surf, the weather has to come up. It has to be quite strong from the south. So what we're really looking for are storms that hit France and will drive a bit of swell up from there. When you're out in the water, one of the most common little friends that you have out there would be the seals coming up to you. They're really curious. Especially when there's a bit of swell in the water. It will churn up the silt from the river and the water might be a bit murky. They know you're there, but they don't know how far away you are and come right up beside you. They just want to see. You look like a seal as well with your hood up and in the wetsuit, so they are like, 'What are you doing? What are you doing here?'

Young surfers on Curracloe Beach.

A colony of grey seals near Raven Point.

Rosslare Harbour beach.

At a surf school in Curracloe.

Sabrina Slattery

Sabrina Slattery and her horses in a field near their stables.

When I came down here, I just fell in love with the beach. It's on a lot of people's bucket list to be able to ride a horse on the beach. There's just something really magical about that. I don't know where it has come from, but I've always loved horses, every aspect of them. I'm not sure what it is, but Irish people certainly seem to have a great relationship with young horses, producing horses. It appears to be a very natural thing here in Ireland. It's really super to have the coastline because it's fabulous for the horses' mentality.

Horse and rider just returned from the beach.

Horseback riding on Killilllane Bay Beach.

Brendan Wickham

Because of the port you get a lot of people travelling to and from here. I play music and so it's extra special because a lot of people are coming in and listen to the music. We're in the pub and play a few tunes, playing sessions like we're sat down in a chair. You're not on stage and you're not mic'd up. The visitors love that. They've never seen this type of thing. And it's lively. It's a whole culture. It's a whole way of life and it's fantastic. I have a passion for that sound. County Wexford would be the home for uilleann piping. This is where it all started, going way back with some of the travelling men who were pipers.

Brendan Wickham entertains Rosslare Harbour locals with his folk tunes.

Uilleann pipes, the native Irish bagpipes.

Noted folk musician Brendan Wickham playing at the social club in Rosslare Harbour.

Padraig Quirke

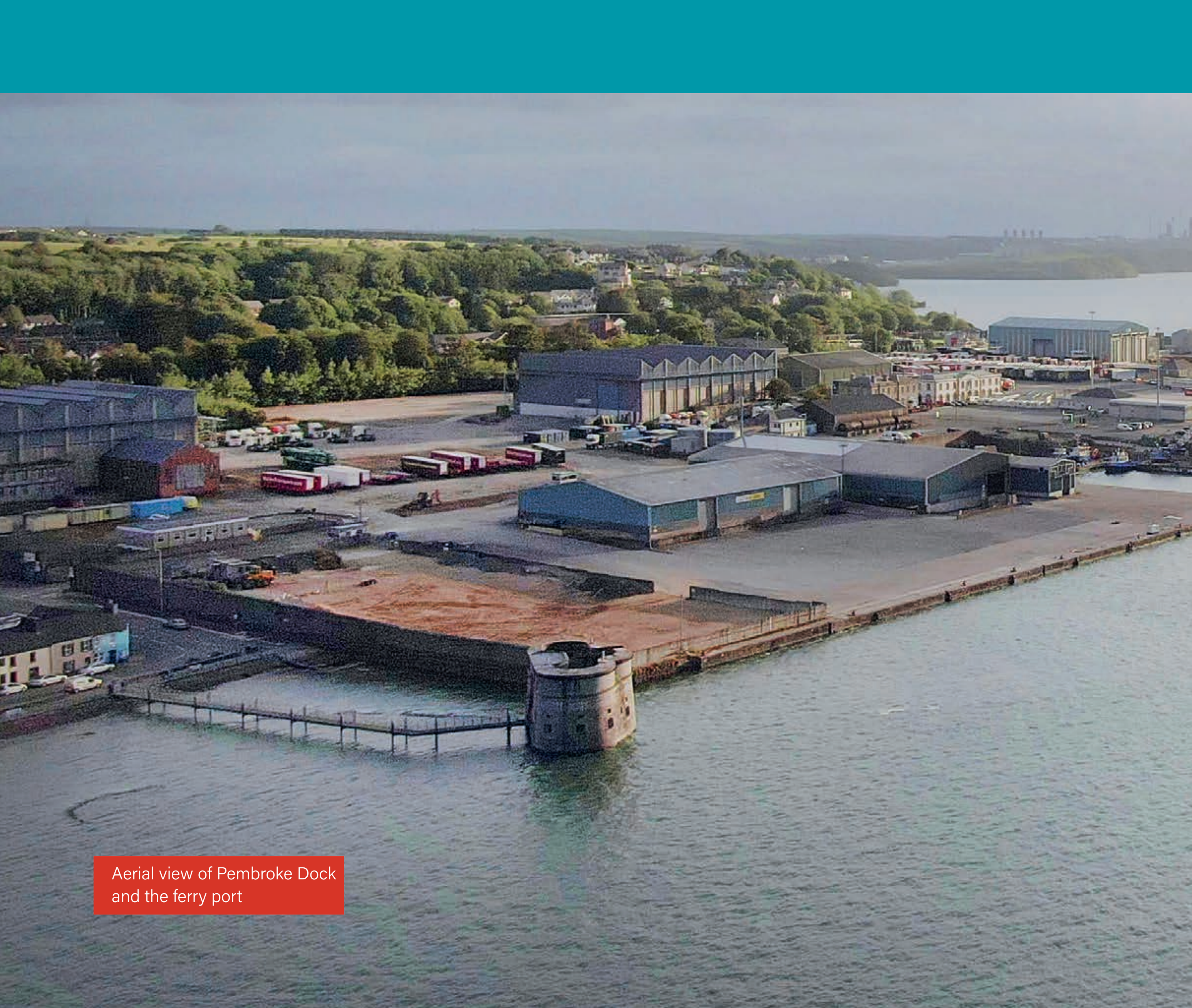
Madeleine and Padraig Quirke.

Well, over the years, I've done fishing and canoeing and sailing and I've hiked along the shore. The sights and the smells I find magnificent. When you live by the sea, you can smell it, you can hear it, you can see it, and if you go for a swim in it, you can taste it sometimes. The sea appeals to all the senses. On a calm day, the sea can be calm in different ways. And when the sea is wild, it can be really wild. Our patch of the sea here is one of the dodgiest patches of sea you'll get anywhere. Between here and Tuskar, the waves coming from all sorts of directions and the way they interact with each other, even master mariners from far away remark on how this patch of sea has amazed them. So it's an interesting spot. There are lots of wading birds along these shores. Red shanks which are named for their red legs and green shanks which are named for their green legs, but we also have one called the sandpiper. And the sandpiper, no doubt, is named for his whistle or tune.

On Rosslare Harbour beach.

At the Rosslare Small Boat Harbour.

TROPHY



Aerial view of Pembroke Dock and the ferry port

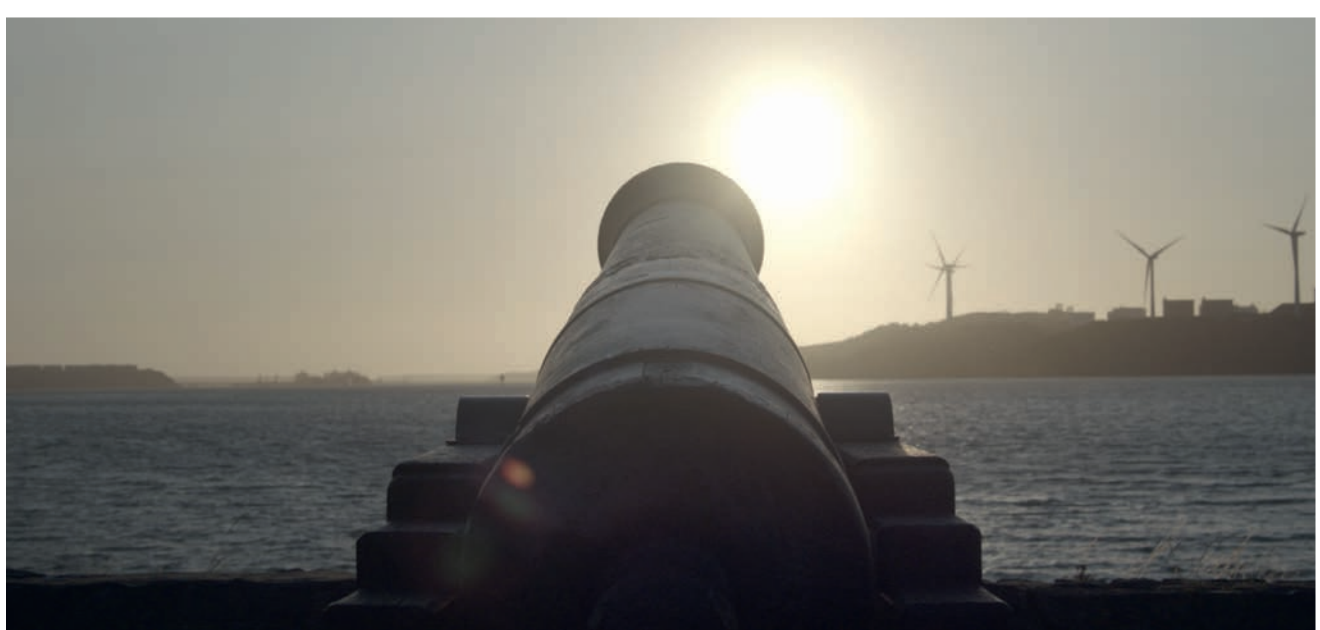
Pembroke Dock

Aerial view of the impressive Defensible Barracks situated on the outskirts of Pembroke Dock.

Pembroke Dock town historically housed the workers employed in the attached Royal Dockyard. It was designed in the 1810s with a grid layout which accounts for its straight, wide roads.

Pembroke Dock, Doc Penfro in Welsh, developed in the nineteenth century from the small village settlement Paterchurch or Pater village on the banks of the Cleddau River. The extensive waterway with its natural harbours served as point of departure for multiple invasions of Ireland, including those under Henry II and, much later, Oliver Cromwell. The Waterway was also the place where Richard II disembarked on his return from Ireland to meet his defeat by Henry Bolingbroke in 1399.

Located on the north side, Milford Haven was founded as a new town in 1793 by Sir William Hamilton and his nephew, Charles Greville, who invited several Quaker families from Nantucket to settle there and run a whaling fleet. In 1800, a naval dockyard was established there, building ships throughout the Napoleonic wars. Eventually in 1814, the Royal Dockyard was transferred across the river to Paterchurch and a new town grew up around it. Royal navy ships were commissioned and built here for over 100 years, with the last one, the *Oleander*, launched in 1922. During the twentieth century, Pembroke Dock served as an important base for the RAF, and became the most significant centre for Sunderland flying boats in the world. In 1940, the Luftwaffe attacked, bombing a series of nearby oil-tanks and causing a massive conflagration.



A disused cannon located near Pembroke Dock's West Martello Tower and pointing out towards the Milford Haven Waterway.

This overwhelmingly military history has left a striking architectural legacy of admiralty buildings, Martello towers, barracks, a naval chapel and large-scale hangars to house the Sunderlands. One of these hangars saw the creation of the Millennium Falcon in 1979 for the Star-Wars film *The Empire Strikes Back*. Today, Pembroke Dock houses the Irish Ferries passenger service to Rosslare.

Nearby Pembroke Castle.

Bladderwrack

Greg Howes

Forged from the fire of the Napoleonic wars,
A new harbour was born,
red upon the rock.
For Pembroke, a dock.

A sword, a shield for a kingdom so bold.
Forts were built,
but no blood was spilt.
Martello was their name.

The shipyard grew strong
and the Cleddau did throng,
with boats and beaters of steel.

Loosening the hand of land, we embrace the haven's swell.
A bountiful basin, where once Vikings did dwell,
full of fish, fishers and shell.

Weaving over the waves we look north
to see Milford spreading forth,
its wings wide across the Haven's dew.
As the promise of wide waters beckon,
we see St Anne's upon the mount,
a legend to reckon,
a lighthouse most fair.

Underneath this halo glory
we find the beginning of noble Henry's story.

In the year fourteen eighty-five
Henry Tudor's dream came alive,
in exile no more,
he cast upon the Pembrokeshire shore.
He knew no rest until King Richard was dead
and the white rose of the land turned red.

In the wake of a King's landing,
we greet the islands where men are no more,
just ghosts and mist upon the shore.

A new realm,
at our helm,
A wild and winged crown,
puffins, gannets and chuffs
rise regally from a turquoise gown.

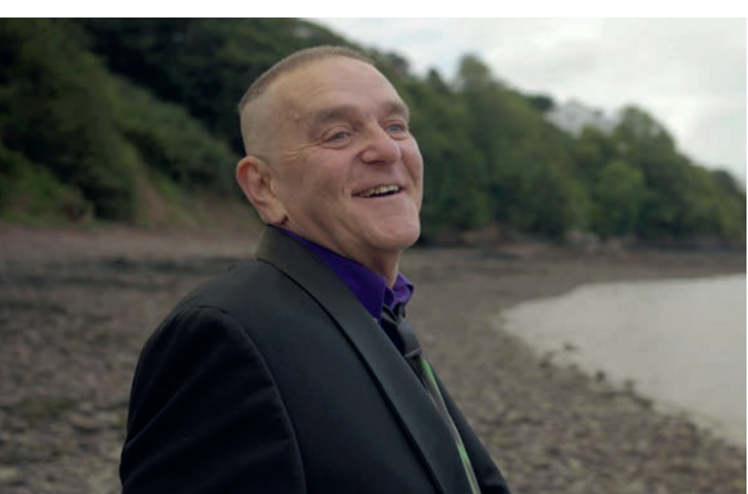
Soon all becomes water,
a single tumbling thread that binds the lands anew,
together as one
where we all begun.

The singing water wanders and weaves upon the wave,
their song of saints and Ogham script,
of wrecks and reefs, smugglers and thieves.
Fishermen and mermaids, tales tall and wide,
spun upon a dolphin's hide.

Bladderwrack.
To Ireland and back.

Bladderwrack

Greg Howes


Greg Howes, poet and writer of historical fiction.

Before 1814, Pembroke Dock was little more than a very sleepy fishing village, but after 1814, it became a naval dockyard. Hundreds of ships were built here and it rose to national and worldwide significance. One of the historical points in the Haven are these wonderful gun towers. There are a few of them in the waterway leading out and there's another one at Tenby. They were only completed midway through the nineteenth century, though the plans for them were drawn up many years before. Since the Napoleonic wars, we've always had a fear of being invaded. By the time that these forts and gun towers were actually finished, the threat from the sea had long gone. So they became white elephants almost instantly.

The view of Thorne Island from West Angle Bay.

Greg Howes on West Angle Bay beach.

West Martello Tower, Pembroke Dock.

In the first half of the nineteenth-century, a defensible fort was built on Thorne Island with the intent to defend the coast against a possible French invasion.

Ceris Aston

I always dreamt of living on an island. I think I read too many adventure books when I was a kid. This place, Skomer, its cliffs are full of birds. It's noisy. It's smelly. There's an absolute cacophony. I love it. Skomer Island is the largest Manx shearwater colony in the world. We've got forty per cent of the world's population of Manx shearwater nesting here and at night it is just alive with the sound of them. If you're crossing on a ferry over to Ireland then you might see some of the birds we have nesting here. Also being just that little bit further out, you potentially see not just common dolphin, but maybe Risso's dolphin, and if you're really lucky minky whale, which would be pretty cool. But the ferry also passes quite close to Grasholm Island, the third largest gannetry in the UK. So the people on the ferry would be able to see and potentially even hear the birds and watch them diving, which is an incredible sight.

Ceris Aston works as a warden for the National Nature Reserve on Skomer Island, recording wildlife on land and sea.

On Skomer Island.

Skomer can be reached by a special boat service that takes visitors from Martin's Haven to the island at regular intervals during spring and summer.

Surveying the coast in all weathers.

David James

David James, local maritime historian, boating enthusiast and former sailing instructor with the Sea Cadets.

One of the stories my dad told me, he said the Imperial Japanese Navy was born in Pembroke Dock. And he said one of the officers planted a tree. When I had the opportunity, I followed it up. I found that the Japanese in the 1850s were a feudal state and isolated. Japan woke up and said, 'Hang on! The big outside world is coming in. We better take notice.' They sent sons of samurai to Greenwich College, one of whom was a lad called Tōgō Heihachirō. He was later sent down to Pembroke Dock. His ship was the *Hiei* which launched in 1877. The ship left Pembroke Dock with a Royal Navy captain and Tōgō Heihachirō was her First Lieutenant. When they arrived in Japan, he found a ginkgo tree. He sent it back with the message, 'Please plant this tree in the garden of my lodgings in appreciation of the kindness you've shown me.' It was planted and it thrives to this day.

Tōgō Heihachirō's ginkgo has grown into a mature tree and grafts have been taken from it for planting at chosen sites across Japan to mark the special historic connection.

Ginkgo leaves are known for their unique fan shape and texture. They are regarded as living fossils.

Paying a visit to Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō's ginkgo tree planted in the garden of tahe former Master Shipwright of the Royal Dockyard.

Looking out at the Cleddau from Front Street, Pembroke Dock.

Yoriko Omae

Yoriko Omae talks of her work with David James in rededicating a memorial for the ten drowned Japanese sailors of the torpedoed *Hirano Maru*.

A few years ago, local historian David James re-erected a grave marker for the victims of the sinking of the Japanese ship *Hirano Maru* in 1918 as a beautiful granite memorial. I got involved liaising with the stonemason. In Japan, we write letters from top to bottom, from right to left, whereas in the western world, you write sentences in a horizontal way. Initially I didn't expect any Japanese people to live here and gradually I got to know them, but I didn't know anything about the history or an object like this connecting our two countries. I'm so amazed and humbled by this pure act of thoughtfulness and kindness by the local Pembrokeshire people for setting up this memorial.

Yoriko Omae at the memorial and grave for the victims of the *Hirano Maru* sinking. The English inscription reads, 'Here lies Shiro Okosie and nine shipmates who died when the passenger liner Hirano Maru was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland 4th October 1918.'

The Sailors' Chapel in St Mary's churchyard. The chapel is dedicated to St Anthony and was formerly used to lay out the corpses of drowned seamen. It is now used as a place of rest.

The Japanese memorial and grave is located in St Mary's churchyard in Angle.

Aerial view of St Mary's, Angle, towards West Angle Bay and the Milford Haven Waterway.

Marilyn Mitchell

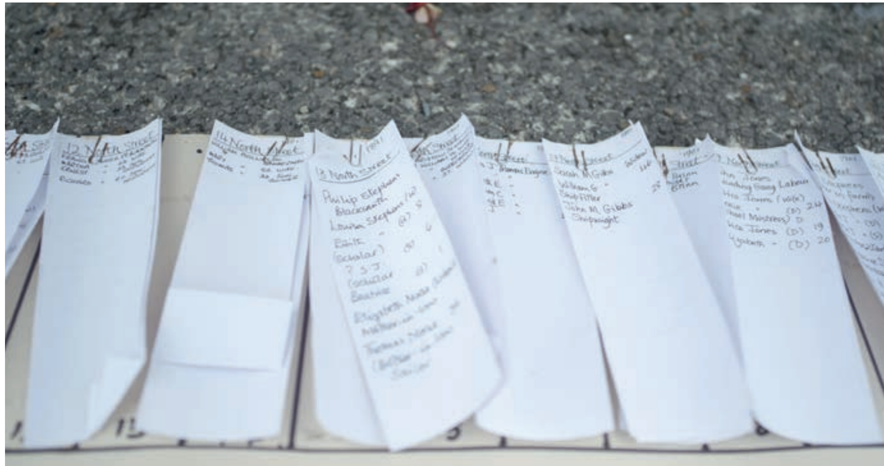
What I enjoy and interests me most about Pembroke Dock are all the things that happened here so many years ago. The street we live in is one of the longest streets in the town. I suppose you could say my street map is like a family tree for the whole street. It goes back to 1891 and a census in 1901 and it's interesting that so many families lived together, the extended families, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law. Well, in the case of my family just up the street, they had six children in the cottage. That's certainly an insight into how things were years ago. I wanted to create this family street map partly to protect the heritage and the history, but also my own history. My grandfather's brother came to live in

Marilyn Mitchell outside her house. She lives on the same street as her ancestors when they first arrived in Pembroke Dock in the late 1800s.

this street in the early 1900s. I love the fact that some of my own relatives walked along here when going into work in the dockyard, an uncle, who was a blacksmith, his two sons who were shipwrights. They all walked along this street along with hundreds of other people over the years.

One of the historic entrances to the former Royal Dockyard.

Marilyn Mitchell at her house in Pembroke Dock. This is one of the typical cottages in the historic part of the town. Possibly some of the first cottages were built for families of the Royal Marines stationed in the Defensible Barracks. When a new gun was brought to the barracks it was so loud that it shook the married quarters within. It was decided to rehouse the families and this street was started. It later also housed the dockyard workers and their families.



A close-up of Marilyn Mitchell's street map with the collected personal details for each inhabitant.

Joshua Beynon

Joshua Beynon, former town councillor and youngest mayor in the history of Pembroke Dock.

Pembroke Dock is quite a new town. It's over two hundred years old, but that's quite new in terms of most towns today. It hasn't been around for that long, but there are just so many stories of people out there. If you just walked down any street, you are guaranteed that everyone's got something different and unique to say. When I'm running, one of the things I like to do is run around the whole historical assets. When you run along the port wall or through some of the old buildings in Pembroke Dock, you're in the middle of that history. And when you look around, you can see the story of Pembroke Dock. You can see how it's developed. If you look at the town and where it grew, imagine it grew from the port and then slowly, slowly, slowly expanded from there. When more housing was built, when more people were needed that's when it grew out. The port is the heart of Pembroke Dock and despite the town growing and growing around it, you've still got the port at the centre.

On the banks of the Cleddau River at Front Street.

Aerial view of the Defensible Barracks built in 1844.

East Martello Tower, Pembroke Dock.

Aerial view of Holyhead New Harbour and Holyhead Mountain in the background.

Holyhead

Aerial view of Holyhead and the ferry port.

Town view from the medieval St Cybi's Church located on the site of the former Roman fort. Note the weathervane shaped like a fish.

Holyhead is the largest town on Holy Island, Anglesey. The town is best known for its role as a major seaport. Its ferry link with Ireland is over 200 years old. Although Holyhead remained a comparatively small fishing village until around 1800, the area was settled as far back as the Neolithic era as can be seen in the remains of many circular huts, burial chambers and standing stones. In the fourth century, a Roman military outpost was established there. Archaeologists think this fort may have had connections with Segontium, located in what is today's Caernarfon. In the sixth century, the now abandoned camp changed its purpose as St Cybi established a church and monastery here. Over the following centuries, the town grew around this site and the Welsh name of Holyhead, Caergybi, 'Cybi's Fort', reflects these Roman and early Christian origins.

Since at least the seventeenth century, Holyhead served as north Wales's main port for sailing to Ireland. The completion of Thomas Telford's post road to London with the opening of his Menai Suspension Bridge (1826) and the arrival of the railway (1848) boosted the growth of the town considerably. In 1819, the first steamships were employed in the transport of mail and passengers between Holyhead and Kingstown (today Dún Laoghaire), thus making the service more reliable and increasing the traffic across the Irish Sea. Eventually, it became necessary to develop a new, much larger harbour that was also able to provide refuge for up to 1,000 ships in the event of bad weather. The result was the construction of the enormous Holyhead breakwater with a length of 2.39km. It remains Europe's longest seawall to this day.

Aerial view of Holyhead Mountain from the south west. The ruins of an Iron Age hillfort and a Roman watchtower are located on the summit.

View of Arfordir Creigiog (Rocky Coast) from the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park.

Near Porth Dafarch.

Mynydd Twr

Gillian Brownson

Blasted from my side, a stone child breaks the water,
like a finger of fossils in the flood,
Holding back trouble, sea serpents & storms
Cradled and battered in the mussels and the mud.

And horizoned, beyond, my great Wicklow sisters,
fastened to the crag of their land,
Freeing the rain, falling on sails
Driving through and stabbing in the sand.

Still, they say goodbye. Mordeithiau.

Those that wonder, waving from the whirl of the water,
in the strum of the salt green sea,
Hauled in from Ireland,
The waves curling, hurling them home to me.

In a forest of masts, then of funnels,
Fisher-manned, and flying into morning,
Past the anchored sun floating,
The light of the sky and the sailor's warning.

They sail by. Agosáu.

Tiny as darting stars they come,
Twinkling under oil and flame
Running on decks, hoisting up sails,
Cracking bottles against their boat's name.

For Centuries, creaking through the murk of fogs,
Over the toll of the boatswain's whistle,
Washing over shipwrecked rocks
Up here, among Gorse & heather & thistle.

I see. Dyma fi.

The messengers come rowing, the tugs towing
the scrolls of the Captain's log.
Or a missive of love, the treaties of kings,
From the pen of an old sea dog.

And some are shadows, below in the bones of ships,
Dark words in an ancient hold,
the letters bold, deep for the divers,
float there, not read and not told.

The Water at War. Byddwn yn eu cofio.

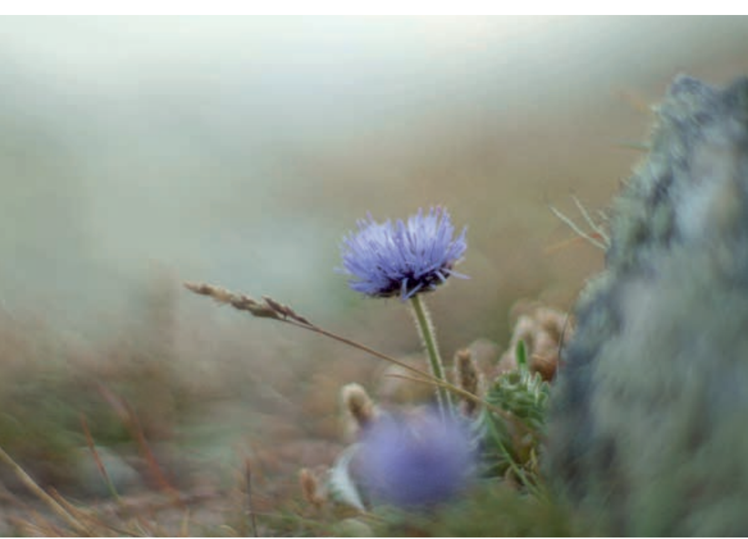
I heard guns, not a fog horn, one morn,
The day's face in the cloud of a frown.
The speed of a torpedo, the crash of the hull,
It came and sang Blow the Man Down.

And an engine failed, in my sky, in my eye,
The Jigs Up went down to the deep.
Now I flower for them, and the many laying here,
And soothe them in death's lonely sleep.

But above, The Boat's in the wind. Lle dych chi'n mynd?

Tracing a track on the back of a monster,
A life anew for you?
Dancing the jig to the horns of ships,
A scouse terrace with a different view.

Neu aros yng Nghymru, o dan yr awyr hallt,
A gwylio'r llongau gyda fi.
Mae eich mordaith wedi bod yn hir,
Now linger here and melt to the Sea.



Sheep's-bit, often found growing on the cliff tops around Holy Island.

Bethel Welsh Baptist Church, Edmund Street. The first Bethel Baptist Church was built on this site in 1810 and rebuilt several times over the next eighty years, with the current building in a Classical style dating from 1895.

Rock formations framing the beach of Porth Dafarch.

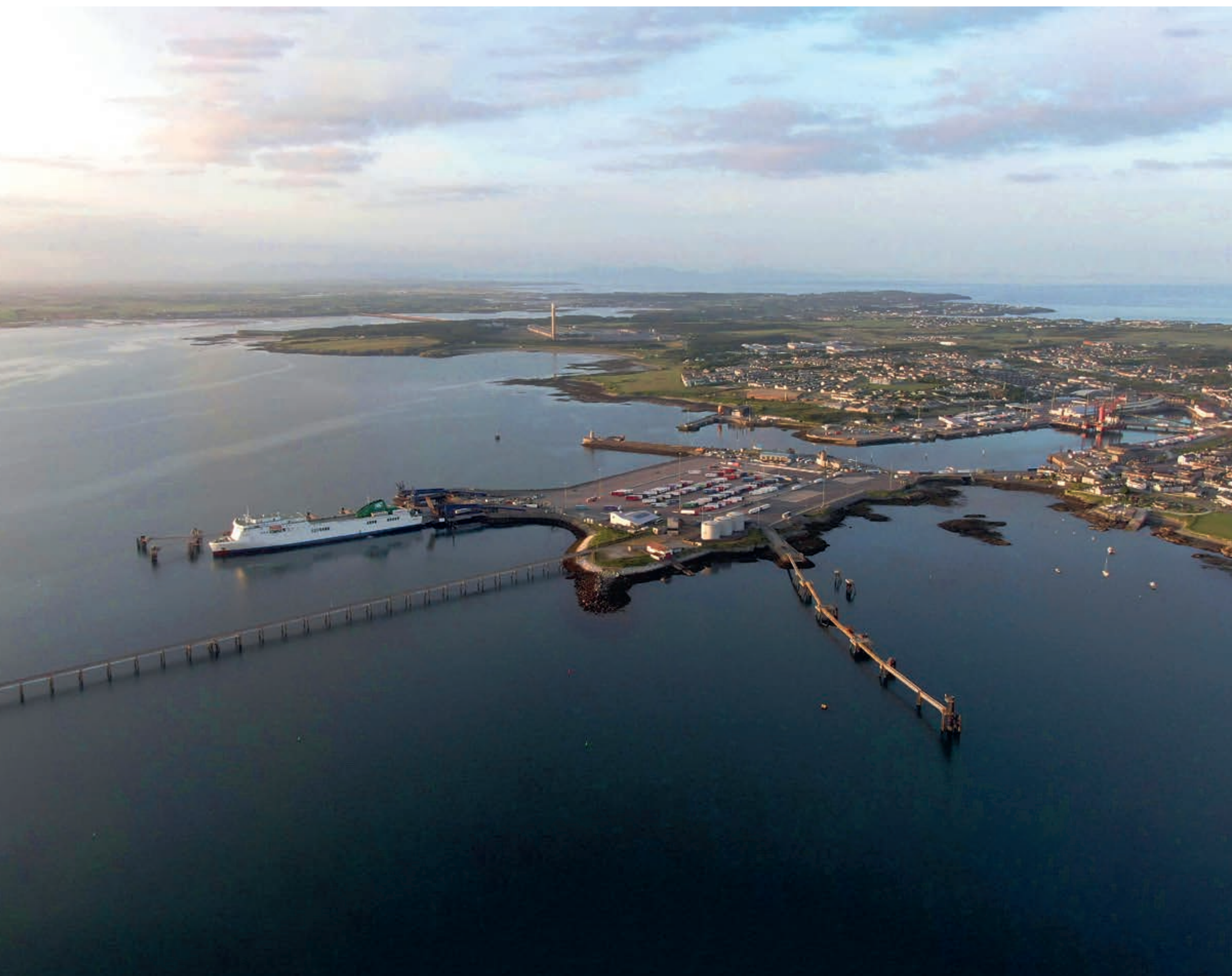
Gillian Brownson

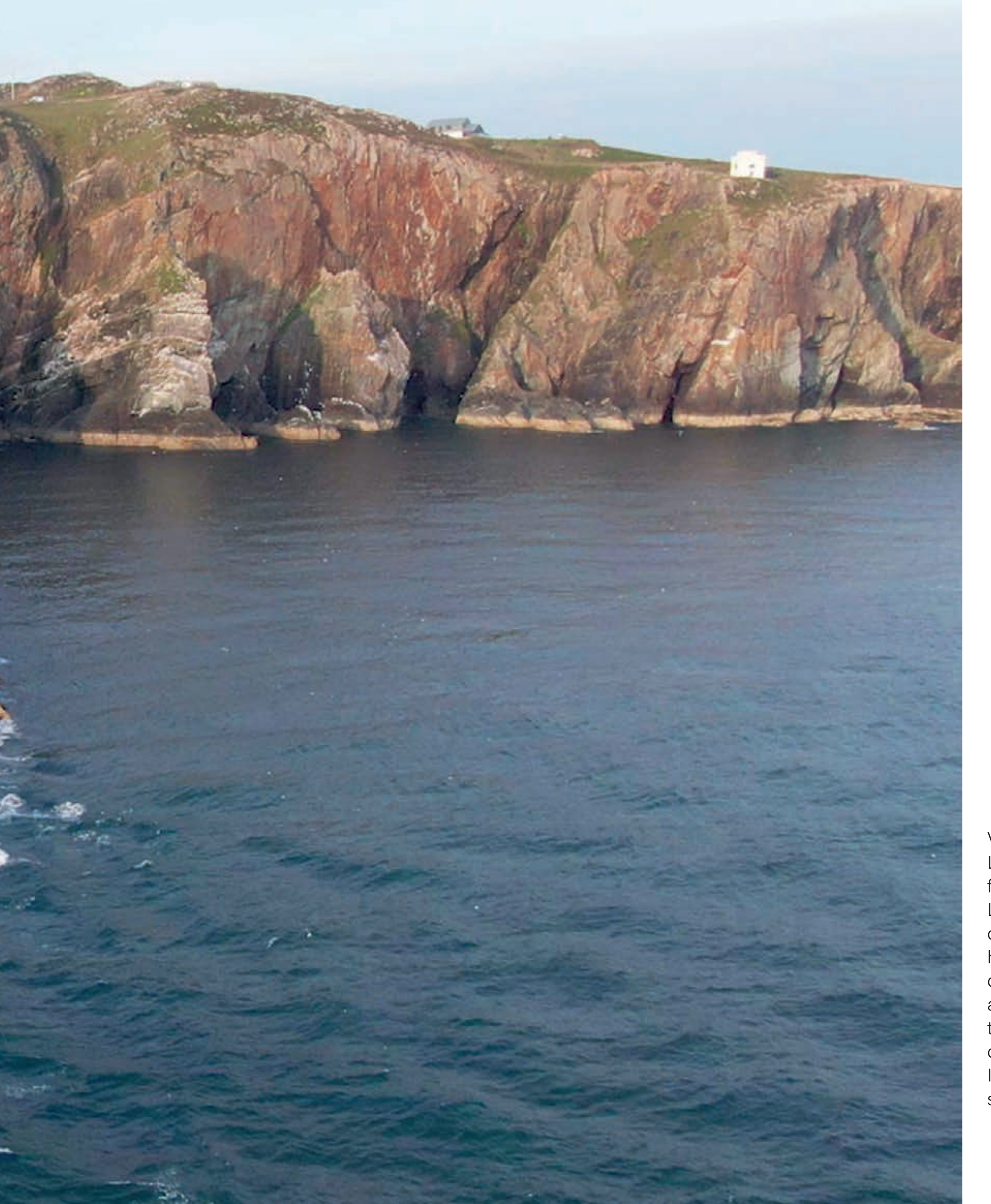
Gillian Brownson, Anglesey storyteller and poet.

I grew up in Holyhead and I write about Holyhead and the surrounding area, Anglesey and Gwynedd. For me Holyhead is an inspiring place, which is why I'm here. Holyhead's relationship to Ireland is really special. I think most people who live in Holyhead identify with Irish people. We feel connected. They're a little bit part of our community and that's not because they pass through it. As you grow up, you know, there are pubs here, there are cafés here. You sit in a pub and you can happily have a chat with someone who's stopping over for an hour or two. Interesting relationships happen. It doesn't feel like two countries. In this port, it feels like we're together, Irish and Welsh.

Exploring the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park.

Aerial view of Holyhead Port.





View of South Stack Lighthouse dating from 1809. Ynys Lawd (South Stack), on which the lighthouse is located, can be accessed via a steep walk down the side of the cliffs of Ynys Cybi (Holy Island) and across a suspension bridge.

Gareth Huws

The Holyhead Maritime Museum has collected a great variety of objects such as model ships, paintings, or whale ear drums, and covers all aspects of the town's maritime history from the past to the present.

Captain John Skinner was a renowned figure in the Holyhead of the early 1800s and he lived in Stanley House near the centre of town. Indeed, his memorial column is still a prominent feature on a hillside above the town. Even though a childhood accident resulted in the loss of one eye and a battle injury during the American War of Independence resulted in an amputated arm, he became a highly-acclaimed sea-captain and ended his career as commodore of the packet boats fleet in Holyhead. Tales of his colourful life abound but mention must be made of his pet raven and that he walked the streets of Holyhead with this raven on his shoulder – just like a pirate with a parrot!

Roedd Capten John Skinner yn un o ffigyrau amlycaf Caergybi yn ystod y 1800au cynnar a bu'n byw yn Stanley House ger canol y dref. Yn wir, amlwg hefyd yw'r gof-golofn iddo, a saif hyd heddiw ar fryncyn uwchlaw'r dref. Er iddo golli ei lygad mewn damwain cyfnod plentyn, a cholli ei fraich yn ystod un o frwydrau Rhyfel Annibyniaeth Yr Amerig, daeth yn gapten llong uchel ei barch, gan ddiweddu ei yrfa fel Pencapten y llongau paced yng Nghaergybi. Mae myrdd o hanesion lliwgar am ei fywyd cyffrous, ond o ddewis un rhaid son mai cigfran ddu oedd ei anifail anwes a cyson y gwelwyd yr hen gapten yn troedio strydoedd Caergybi gyda'r frân ar ei ysgwydd – yn union fel môr-leidr gyda pholi-parot!

Aerial view of the remains of a circular hut from the settlement known as the Tŷ Mawr Hut Circles outside Holyhead dating from the Iron Age.

Gareth Huws visiting St Cybi's Church and its historic churchyard. The foundations for the present church building date from the thirteenth century.

James Sparrow's painting of a Holyhead street scene outside Stanley House, the home of Captain John Macgregor Skinner, in the 1820s. It includes portraits of Captain Skinner with his pet raven and other notable town characters and personal friends. The painting is on display at the Holyhead Maritime Museum.

Wil Stewart

Wil Stewart, park warden at the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park.

The Holyhead Breakwater Country Park started life as a quarry and the reason why a quarry was needed was to provide foundation rubble for the Holyhead Breakwater. Seven million tons of rock were taken from here. The site was derelict for a while and then there was a local initiative to create a country park. This is a great location for running. This route on the Arfordir Creigiog, the Rocky Coast, is very special. What's so special about it? The view. Look at the view! The breakwater is stunning. You can see the shape of it and the enormity, the sheer magnitude of it. The work that went into it, that never, ever escapes you.

The country park is located in a disused quarry below Holyhead Mountain that provided the foundation stones for the Holyhead Breakwater.

Aerial view of Holyhead Breakwater, with almost 2.39 km the longest of its kind in Europe. Construction on the embankment foundations began in 1847 and took 26 years to complete. Over 1,500 men were employed to build it.

In this corner of the country, the Wales Coast Path overlaps with the Isle of Anglesey Coast path. The official starting point for the Anglesey path is located at St Cybi's Church in the town centre of Holyhead. It is 200 km long and takes on average 12 days to complete on foot.

The paths of the Breakwater Country Park along Arfordir Creigiog are suitable for runners and walkers.

Tony Price

I've lived very much in the same streets for about fifty years. I'm a Holyhead boy through and through. Well, living in Waterside area where I came from, you tended to know everything about the lifeboats and those that were on them, the crew. And when the maroons went off, you'd see chaps coming out of the houses and running down the street. So I'd been brought up with all that. When I was in fishing, I had an angling party out at sea here and I got caught in my own anchor warp and pulled over the side. It was only purely luck that I survived because a chappie passed me a knife just as I was going into the sea. A couple of weeks after that, it really made me take stock of everything

Coxswain Tony Price giving instructions to his fellow RNLI crew members.

and who would have come to get me. So I went to the local lifeboat station and offered my services then. I have been fulltime working for the RNLI in the coxswain position here since 2016. And when I see the youngsters come in here now, I think, 'Ideal! I can hang up my boots. I can move on now.'

Holyhead's current rescue vessel, RNLI Lifeboat *17-41*.

Returning to Trinity House, the RNLI station in Holyhead.

Holyhead RNLI leaving the port.

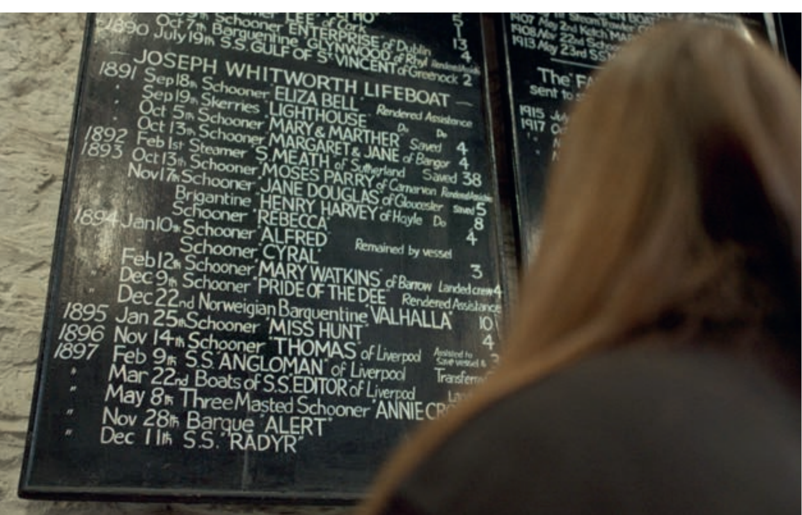
Kiri Chaplin

Kiri Chaplin inspecting lifesaving equipment at Trinity House, the lifeboat station in Holyhead.

I'm passionate about saving lives. When you come back and you get that person ashore safe you feel fulfilled. If I hadn't joined, I could be lying in bed and I wouldn't know somebody was out fearing for their life. Now I can actually act on that because I'm part of the RNLI crew. It feels special to be part of the story. I look back at what people have done over the years and have so much respect for them. I feel very privileged to be in the position that I am now where I can start making my own history.

Suited up.

RNLI Lifeboat *17-41* leaving Holyhead port for an exercise.



Records of historic rescues installed at Trinity House.

Kiri Chaplin and fellow RNLI crew members during an exercise.

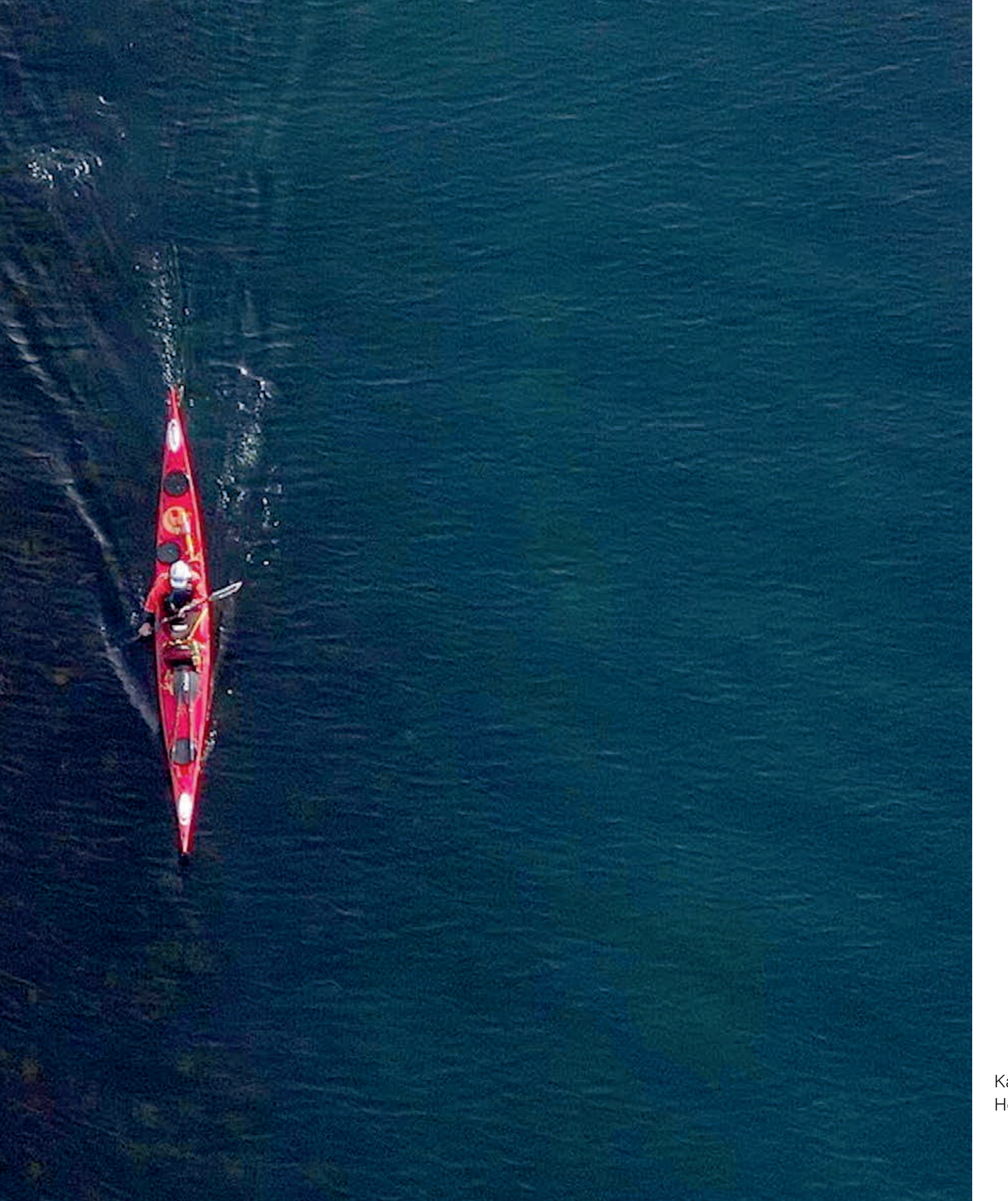
Eila Wilkinson

Eila Wilkinson at Porth Dafarch with its sheltered beach framed by craggy cliffs.

Holyhead is the jewel of Anglesey, of UK sea kayaking. We've got some really spectacular and unique seas around here and lots of tidal races. I have a massive love for sea kayaking and you never quite know what you're going to get out there. When you're on a kayak, you're right down at the level of the sea water. It is a fantastic way to see wildlife. We have porpoise, we have dolphin. We have some fantastic birdlife, the guillemots, the razor bills, puffins, gannets, shearwater. We're guests in their environment, which is a very, very special place to be.

The currents around Holy Island can produce impressive conditions for experienced sea kayakers.

Eila Wilkinson starting for a kayaking tour from Porth Dafarch.

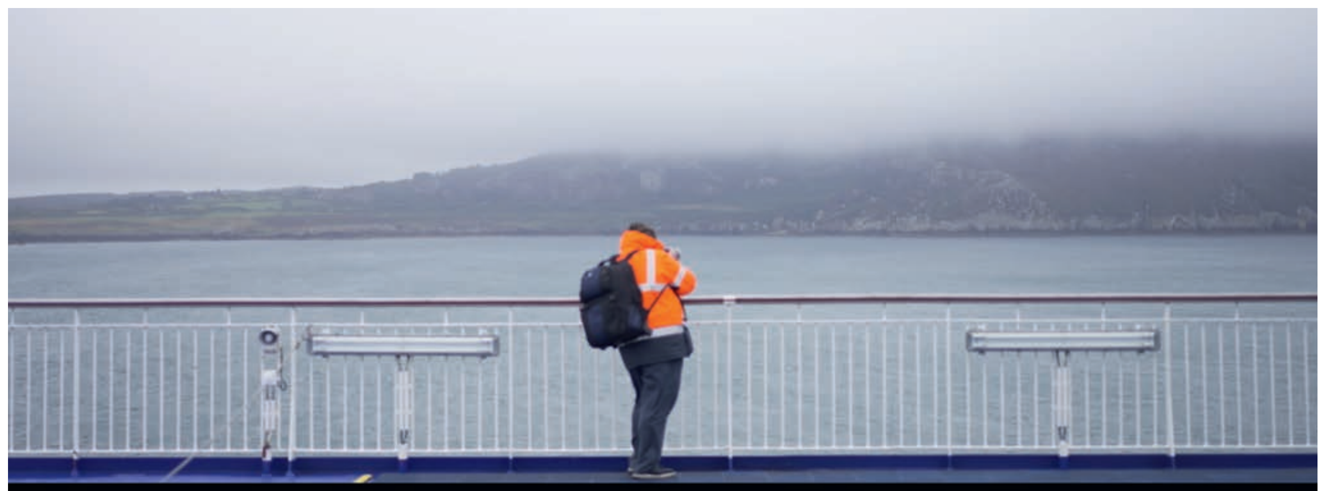


Kayaking round
Holy Island.

Matthew Meade

I remember Holyhead in the 1960s and '70s, the lowing of the cows coming off the cattle boats. I was extremely happy growing up in Holyhead. I was messing about on boats nearly all the time. Have you ever heard of the climber Joe Brown? He was a world-famous Welsh climber in the 1970s. In between South Stack and North Stack, there's a set of cliffs. The BBC filmed it all by lowering cameramen down in cages on either side of Joe climbing up. And I was on a tug offshore with another film crew. Unfortunately, they were violently seasick and no film was produced from that tug station.

Matthew Meade, former seaman turned documentary photographer.



A ferry passing Holyhead Mountain shrouded in mist.

Aerial view of Holyhead Port at sunset.

A Holyhead boatyard.

Aerial view of a ferry approaching Dublin Port.

Dublin Port

Dublin Port with the Howth peninsula rising to the left along the horizon.

Aerial view of Howth Harbour, which served as the short-lived terminus for the packet boat service between Dublin and Holyhead between 1813 and 1826.

The modern history of **Dublin Port** begins in the early 1700s with the construction of a bank to protect the south side of the channel at the mouth of the harbour, enabling ships to reach the city even in high winds. The bank was replaced by the South Bull Wall in 1753 and the Poolbeg Lighthouse was added in 1767. During the eighteenth century, extensive land reclamation works saw Dublin city grow into its distinctive shape, turning east and towards the sea, with walls and fortifications built as protection against the power of the tide and the surge of water in the b ay. By the end of the eighteenth century, the port was at the centre of Dublin's maritime identity and the city had joined an imperial network of migration and trade. In 1800, Dublin was the third largest port city in Europe.

During this period, vessels landed at Pigeon House, and passengers, mail and other goods were rowed to the city in boats. In 1800, the North Bull Wall was constructed following a survey of Dublin harbour by Captain William Bligh of HMS *Bounty* fame. The rival developments of Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) and Howth harbours in the nineteenth century and the growth of competing rail interests in the different ports saw Dublin Port struggle for passenger trade. The Dún Laoghaire ferry link with Holyhead remained in operation until 2015.

Bindon Blood Stoney's diving bell, designed in 1860, eventually innovated the construction of the dock walls and played a vital role in transforming Dublin from a tidal harbour to the deep sea port of today. The decommissioned Bell now resides on Sir Rogerson's Quay and is open to all visitors.

Bullock Harbour near Dalkey Island, which was settled as early as 6,000 years ago and served at one time as a Viking settlement.

Along the Great South Wall towards Dublin Port.

Baily Lighthouse on the Howth peninsula.

Take The Boat

Gary Brown

Leaving the bay of my lover's outstretched arms,
Propelled purposefully and speedily as if from a
Slingshot set between Poolbeg's redundant yet
Robust towers,
Loosening the hold of her horseshoe-magnetic field
Of feelings, foibles and futility for go I must, like
Myriads and masses of others moving in hope,
The hold of love's embrace will always be broken to
Better and build lives for us all, so take the boat
You must, to seek engagement and employment
And emancipation from the swirling cassocks of
A very catholic guilt. Below surging up through the
hulking force beneath,
Rising up through you as you move towards whatever
Destiny deems to be yours, as you look back at your
Harbour of doubts and dutiful obedience to croziers
And crosses, breaking away, breaking away, breaking.
Gliding giddily, cutting a swathe of foam through
Dull darkened waters,
Forging and forcing ahead, away from home, yours
Hers, theirs, daring to glance back at a life lived in
Localities familiar enough, yet fading away now.
Two bus journeys from home then, but now they
Seem close but lost, Bray, Killiney, Dalkey, places
Visited now disappearing dismally as if in a black
And white showreel of summers past.
No anger, only angst reflecting in the water on
What might have been, if home had been another
Place.
Ringsend's realism and the grittiness of Iodine Park
Etched in your mind, your soul, your knees and knuckles,
East Wall and the slob lands of Baile Bocht bringing back
To earth your base reasons for this voyage of discovery.
Unemployment lines of dull desperation determine your fate,
A far away faith denying freedom to fearful feminists, young
But brave enough and scared enough to take this boat to
Furtive surreptitious places and practices, seeking a
Way to end something before it begins to take hold
Of lives unprepared and resourceful enough to provide.

Pulling away game fully now towards open seas, seaward,
Belting and breaking, freewheeling further and further,
Holding up a long-distance mirror of mature memories,
Raheny, Sutton, Baldoyle and Binn Eadair speeding now,
Almost skipping past the Kish, the beckoning beacon
Of hope in hostile defiance of tempests and time,
Welcoming as it waves you Godspeed from the holy ground
Towards Holyhead.
Journeys of memos and missals, monies and moribund messages,
Of lives beginning and declining, deaths, births and marriages
Announced backwards and forwards across this stretch of
Sometimes stormful sea.
Passengers of poets, pastors and politicians travelling in triumph
Or travesty, traversing troubled times and waters to leave
Forever or return in silence, exile and cunning, for good
News travels fast, disaster more daring, it dashes ahead.

Steaming away now from a life I have known to better
My future and find perhaps a new home, maybe
To find more love in Cricklewood, Catford or Camden Town.
This boat is a lifeline no matter how often we must come and go.
As with our river and sea it ebbs and flows, it comes, it goes,
Connecting our futures, our pasts, our friends, our foes.

Ringsend, Dublin. This inner suburb has a strong historic association with ship building and ships arriving from across the Irish Sea. The majority of Dublin's deep-sea dockers used to hail from here.

Ringsend, Dublin.

The wild goats of Dalkey Island.

Gary Brown

I was bred in Dublin, but I was born in Birmingham because my parents had to take the boat in the '50s because there was no employment here in Ireland. So they emigrated to England as did thousands of others. A year and a half after I was born, we came back to live in Dublin. Both my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, unusually, are all from Dublin. The journey from here to Holyhead is interesting for me because it's been a lifeline, not just for the city, but the whole of Ireland. People gravitated towards the city to get to the port to take the boat. It has connotations for me of unemployment, especially in the '50s, '60s and '70s. And the boat was also the mailboat, it was the cattle boat. It was a lifeline for people who were working and often husbands went away to work in England while their wives stayed in Ireland and they sent their money back on the mailboat through letters. So to me the boat signifies an ongoing connection between Ireland and the UK.

Gary Brown exploring the Great South Wall leading from Poolbeg Power Station to the lighthouse.

Along the Great South Wall.

Shane O'Doherty

Shane O'Doherty, tour leader and guide.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the British had discovered that Dublin Port itself and Dublin Bay was too hostile to serve as a reliable harbour to sailing ships because of the westerly winds. William Bligh was sent over after the mutiny on the *Bounty* to survey Dublin and to determine where would be the best place for a mail boat station for instant communications between Dublin and London. And Bligh decided that Howth was the best place to build the mailboat station. I think it was the change to steam that led them to abandon it and Howth harbour was pretty much left to rot, but we still have it, this beautiful little harbour.

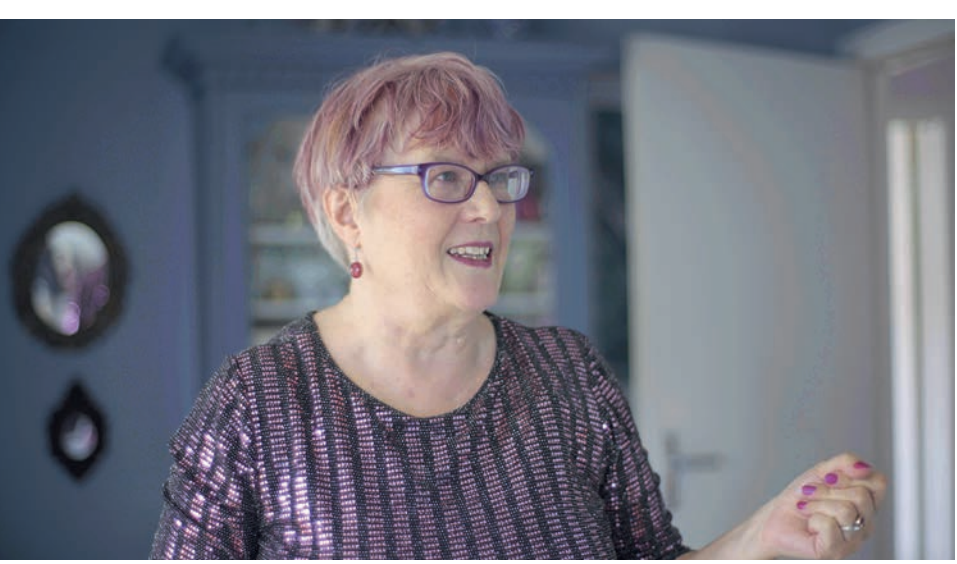
Aerial view of the intertidal zone of the Howth peninsula.

Howth harbour. King George IV landed here almost unobserved in 1821 on his tour of the realm. He arrived several days late as the Royal Yacht had been delayed in Holyhead harbour due to strong westerly winds. The imprints of his feet have been cut into the West Pier by a local stonemason.

Martello Tower Sutton, Howth. Like their Welsh cousins, the Irish Martello towers were constructed in the first half of the nineteenth century, but became obsolete with the introduction of more powerful artillery.

Cliffs around Howth peninsula.

Audrey Mac Cready



Audrey Mac Cready, genealogist and writer.

I think it's important to preserve the history of the port because it's intrinsic to the identity of the whole country. Everything that was going in and out of Ireland came through the port. Probably the best-informed people about global geography were dockers because they were handling all these loads that were coming in, all these exotic timbers and fruit. They knew where they were coming from, where the ships were going to. So they would have a great awareness of what the world was. As you're standing in the port and you're looking out there, you've got the sea and the sky and this line. And you always ask the question, 'What's over there?'

Inside the Bottle Boy, formerly known as O'Connor's, one of the old early house pubs operating on the North Wall Quay in the Dublin Port area.

Along the Great South Wall towards Poolbeg Lighthouse.

Aerial view of Dublin Port on the southern bank of the Liffey.

John Hawkins

I worked with my dad quite a bit because he wanted to teach me the ways of slinging different types of cargo. Then when the machinery started on the docks, it became a necessity to learn how to drive the different types of fork trucks. As the times moved on, the general cargo began to fizzle out. It all became containerized. So to move with the time, the first thing was to learn to drive one of the small fork trucks. Then the machinery got a little bit bigger, and I was lucky to get one of the permanent jobs driving one of the big empty container handlers. I worked with a gang and there were maybe six or eight of us who drove the big machinery and we became our own little family. Each one of us knew more about each other than our wives knew about us. I would go back and start from day one all over again and I wouldn't do anything else.

Members of St Patrick's Rowing Club of Ringsend, Dublin.

Former Dublin dockers Alan Martin, Declan Byrne, Paddy Nevins and Paddy Daly revisiting their old work place and presenting the tools of their trade. Alan holds a collection of so-called 'buttons.' A button was a badge which was given to union members and that afforded its owner work privileges over non-members. The different kinds of hooks were used to handle cargo of various size, shape and weight, such as timber, boxes or bags.

Ex-dockers Paddy Nevins and Declan Byrne.

Michael Foran

I was born and reared on the docks of Dublin. Everything was nearly cobblestone on the docks at the time. That was the Dublin of the 1950s to me. We've done bulk, bags, timber, steel, you name it. And then the containers came in. Everything was containerized. What you see in the port here now, that's the world we live in. The box took over the docks. The box that changed the world. I've had some great craic down here. I've worked very hard down here. We delivered goods all over Ireland, every corner, every village, we'd deliver.

Historic photograph of North Wall.

Aerial view of a container ship docked in Dublin Port. With containerisation, the large yellow cranes largely replaced the smaller forklifts.

Michael Forran, former dock worker, outside Dublin Port.

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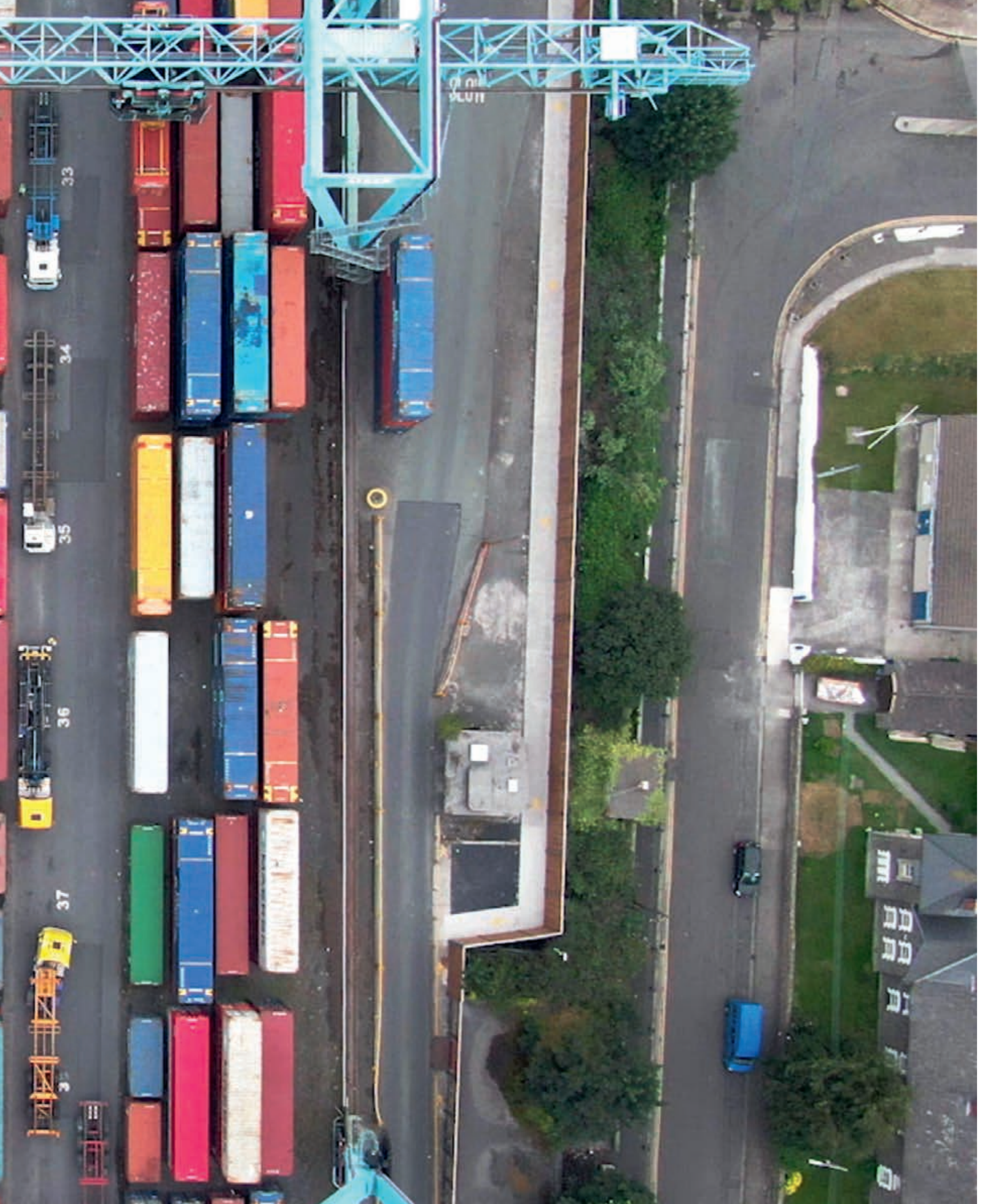
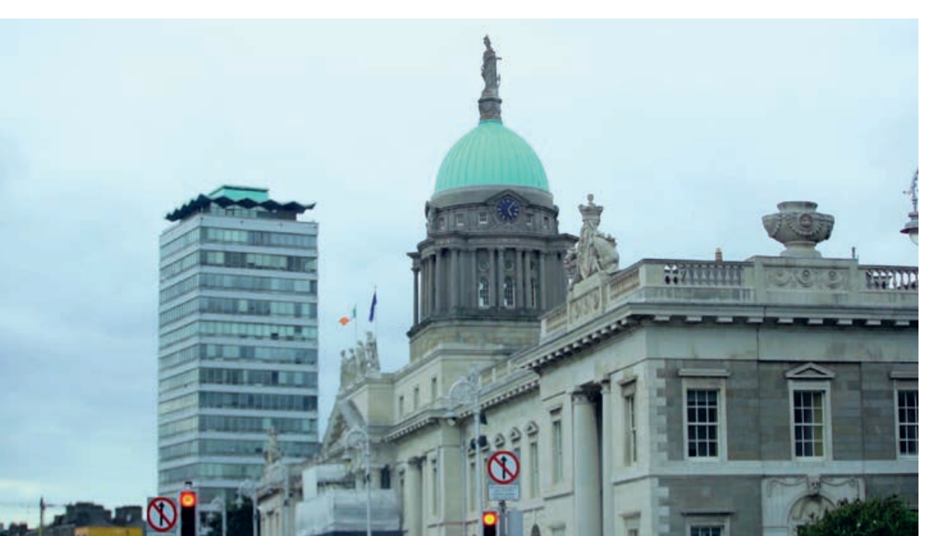


Container boxes in Dublin Port.

Kay Foran

Kay Foran, former worker at a flour mill in Dublin Port.

I had worked previously in lots of sewing factories around Dublin. My father was a docker and he used to say to me, 'You have to get a union job, Kay. Go down to Liberty Hall and tell Mr Duff I sent you.' And I went down and said my father sent me to get a union job and he said, 'I've no jobs here for women. Well, I've only got one job here at the moment and it's down for Dublin Port Milling Company. It's for a fella.' And I said I can do what a youth can do and I think he got a bit fed up with me and said, 'Go down Monday morning and see a guy down there called Paddy Murphy.' I couldn't believe it when I got there. It was a big industrial place, silos, forklifts. And Paddy Murphy had a big red face and got fed up with me and said, 'And by the way, you won't be able to wear mini skirts here. – There's stairs all over the place. Call into the office and collect a note for O'Connors in Jervis Street to get your jeans and overalls.'



Liberty Hall, once Ireland's tallest building and former home to the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, on the left and to its right the historic Custom House. The two iconic buildings are located on North Wall.

Kay Foran retracing her footsteps as a young woman when she used to work for a flour mill in Dublin Port.

Jenny Kilbride

Dublin Bay is a UNESCO biosphere, so as soon as you exit the harbour, you're straight away greeted by the birds and the seals. In the centre of the city you have the port, which of course is full of history, then very close by you have Dalkey Island. Around Dalkey was at one time the main port for Dublin. And so it has all that amazing history going on, but it also has a colony of sixty seals who are very playful, very curious and more than willing to interact with us when they feel like it. You have dolphins, you have porpoises. To have that kind of diversity in such a small place I think makes Dublin Port a really special place.

Jenny Kilbride, sea kayaker and explorer of the Dublin biosphere.

Kayaking from Bullock Harbour.

A colony of grey seals live on Dalkey and can easily be seen during kayaking tours around the island.

The Martello tower and remains of an ancient church on Dalkey Island. According to archaeological evidence, the island was first inhabited already 6,000 years ago.

Aerial view of Jenny Kilbride exploring Dalkey Island in her kayak.

Seán Potts

I'm a musician and I play the uilleann pipes which are the Irish bagpipes. I'm third generation Dublin. I'm very much a Dub, very proud of my roots here in the city. Interestingly, the relationship between the port and Irish traditional music isn't direct because the music very much came from the country, from rural people. It eventually grew and strengthened the city in the early twentieth century with this migration of people. But one thing that was strong and remained strong in the city was piping.

Seán Potts carries on the proud family tradition of playing traditional Irish music.

Live music is part and parcel of the trade at Piper's Corner.

Irish musician Seán Potts sr, famous for playing the tin whistle and founding member of The Chieftains.

Stopping Places:
Heritage Tourism and the Challenge of Regenerating Port Towns in Ireland and Wales

Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman

Introduction

In this afterword, we focus our attention on some of the significant challenges facing port authorities, port communities and policymakers in regenerating port towns in Ireland and Wales. The focus of 'Ports, Past and Present' is on the four towns and one city that are currently linked by three ferry services. These five port 'towns' – as we will call them – face significant challenges with the continually unfolding ramifications of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside competition from air travel for the Ireland to UK passenger market. While our one port city – Dublin – is a vibrant capital city that is central to the economic, cultural and political life of Ireland, the port area itself – especially the Dublin Port Authority controlled area – is a more marginal industrial zone which is generally passed through by tourists. The other four port towns – Rosslare Harbour, Pembroke Dock, Holyhead, and Fishguard – are physically and economically peripheral places on the edge of each nation, although the presence of operational ferry routes means that they are key border crossing points, international gateways, and essential nodes at the centre of important routes between Ireland and Wales.

The long history of sea crossings between Ireland and Wales has seen other towns and cities – including Swansea, Dún Laoghaire and Cork – lose their ferry services and stop being passage points between the two countries. 'Ports, Past and Present' aims to recentre the five current port towns by showcasing their cultural heritage, creative energies and potential for economic growth. What emerges is a creative recentring of the ports and their coastal communities, as well as the sea itself.

Ports in context

It has become something of a truism to say that 'geography' has an earthly territorial bias. Seas, oceans, coasts and ports, it is claimed, have been frequently overlooked by scholars whose focus reflects our predominantly earth-bound concerns. As a counter, a number of geographers have joined other social science and humanities scholars to call for increasing attention to the social, cultural, political and historical significance of sea travel and sea spaces. Ports may show up in a range of disciplines and debates – from critical studies of logistics, to naval social histories – but they still remain relatively

neglected in comparison with, say, global cities. While ports may no longer appear to be vital to the global movements of people in the way they were a century ago, they are still clearly vital to global flows of goods (as well as remaining important for passenger flows). The centring of studies of global geographies around 'global cities', digital capital flows, international airports and the internet appears to have only compounded the marginalisation of ports. Nevertheless, academics and policy-makers do continue to try and make sense of ports. Academics, port authorities and governments stress the economic importance of ports for cities, regions and states, as well as their significance as sites of political regulation where cross-border flows of people and goods are managed by border and customs authorities, as well as logistics companies. In contrast, much less attention has focussed on the relationship between ports and their broader port communities. One of the aims of 'Ports, Past and Present' has been to consider ports as historic places where people live and work and where communities have been forged over long periods of time. As a result, the project has recognised the multi-facetted dimensions of port communities as meaningful places situated in a kind of littoral zone at the interface of land and sea, emphasising the social and economic challenges faced in what are often relatively deprived communities.

Ports as infrastructures

Ports are essential transfer sites or spaces facilitating movements of people, goods and information between marine and terrestrial spaces, and vice versa. They are usually on the coastline, enabling direct transfers between maritime and terrestrial vehicles, although they can also be found on estuaries, large lakes, fjords, lochs and rivers. This shift between terrestrial and marine mobility modes is key to their functionality, although the political geographies of intermediating sea spaces are generally overlooked in favour of a focus on terrestrial departure and arrival points, i.e. the two land masses between which goods and people travel, especially where this occurs across national borders. Logistical efficiency is seen as a key goal of both ports and transport companies, and the design and layout of ports can play an important role in facilitating the movements of people and goods. Port authorities search for technological and infrastructural solutions to improve the flows and tracking of people and goods, but this is not just a question of increasing the volumes and speed of flows. Ports are key sites of immobility, massing and waiting, with port authorities and shipping companies recognising the need to 'park', store, combine and sort mobile things to ensure that goods are moved safely, efficiently, securely, and at the right time. The preference for many port authorities seemingly encourages early arrival and waiting in secured areas of the port itself, which while understandable, presents challenges if we would like to persuade passengers to visit the port towns themselves.

The piecemeal development of many historic British ports and their towns over centuries has led to challenges for both access and potential expansion.

On the one hand, concerns about increasing traffic levels, car emissions and congestion impacting local traffic movements has led planners to try and channel traffic away from town and city centres, with the added result that those travellers may be less likely to stop outside of the port. On the other hand, a combination of local topography and urban geography has constrained the ability of planners to do this for all ports, which may, paradoxically, increase the likelihood of travellers stopping in the towns themselves, as they see opportunities to park, grab a meal or visit tourist attractions. In Pembroke Dock, for example, cars and lorries have to travel through the town centre and historic naval port in order to access the ferry terminal. In contrast, in Fishguard, a bypass around the western edge of the town was opened in 2000, such that traffic on the A40 heading to the ferry port at Goodwick no longer needs to pass through Fishguard town centre.

What is clear for us is that ports should not simply be framed as through-places whose function is to facilitate movement. Ports are also stopping and pausing places for travellers, as well as places of dwelling and working for locals. Stasis and immobility (as well as mobility) are essential to their functioning and success as places, and it might be that our five port towns could learn from the success of French ports such as Ouisterham or Roskoff in promoting themselves as tourist destinations – places to shop and eat before embarking on a ferry journey.

A similar argument could be made about how our five port towns are marketed as cruise ship 'destinations.' Cruise ships visit all five of our ports, with varying levels of frequency, but when they arrive the majority of disembarking passengers are coached onwards to high profile tourist destinations elsewhere. One of the aims of 'Ports, Past and Present' has been to raise the profile of the port towns and surrounding coastal communities as destinations in themselves. Why? In part, because we believe that they have cultural heritage assets and leisure opportunities that may appeal to cruise passengers, but also because more proximate attractions would minimise the need for onward coach travel, reducing emissions and overcoming accessibility challenges As a result, we wonder whether Welsh and Irish port authorities could learn from places such as the Orkney Islands or Warnemünde in Germany.

Ports as places of deprivation

Despite their significance as key infrastructural nodes, port towns are frequently characterised by higher than average levels of poverty and deprivation. The increasing containerisation and mechanisation of ports in the mid- to late-twentieth century led to reductions in demand for labour within the ports. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the ports we have been working with as part of 'Ports, Past and Present', particularly those in Wales, are characterised by high levels of deprivation. The Welsh Deprivation Index (2019) shows that areas of two of our three port towns are some of the most deprived in Wales: three areas of Pembroke Dock and one in Holyhead are in the top 10 per cent of most deprived areas in Wales, and a further two areas of Pembroke Dock and four in Holyhead are in the

top 20 per cent of deprived areas. Further evidence of the existence of poverty and deprivation comes from the fact that key areas of Pembroke Dock and Holyhead have also been designated as Communities First Cluster areas (i.e. communities characterised by extensive poverty). These challenges are recognised by the Welsh Government, and attempts are being made to revive and regenerate these port towns (discussed later).

Brexit has led to a fundamental shift in the status of Wales's ports. While it was possible before Brexit for hauliers to transport Irish goods to mainland Europe via the British 'land bridge' in some twelve hours, the time taken will increase as a result of the UK's exit from the European Union's Customs Union. Not surprisingly, ferry companies have been launching new direct ferry routes between Dublin and Rosslare and continental Europe, by-passing the British 'land-bridge' and Welsh ports. This has included new routes between Rosslare Harbour and Cherbourg, Rosslare Harbour and Dunkerque, and Dublin Port and Cherbourg, and an increased frequency of services on existing routes from Ireland to mainland Europe. In January 2022, The *Irish Times* announced that the number of driver-accompanied lorry trailers travelling between Dublin Port and Holyhead, Liverpool and Heysham had dropped by 21 per cent. While it is too early to assess the importance of these new routes on the volume of freight and number of passengers travelling between Ireland and Wales, it is likely that they will have a notable impact.

Port heritage

The five ports connecting Ireland and Wales all have a significant amount of tangible and intangible heritage associated with them. While there is much to celebrate in each of the five ports, further efforts are needed to protect and promote this heritage.

The most tangible aspects of heritage are the port buildings, quaysides and docks that reflect the varied histories of the ports. Given the dynamic nature of these working ports, it is no surprise that many prominent port buildings have been demolished over the years, while other important buildings have been protected (and given listed status). In Holyhead, the main piers, lighthouses, Harbour Office, Customs House, George IV Arch, railway station shed, and assorted offices and workshops have been listed. In Pembroke Dock, a number of slipways, drydocks, graving docks, jetties, seaplane hangars, and former naval buildings have been listed. In Dublin Port and Rosslare Harbour, a range of dockyard structures are included in Ireland's National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

What is clear is that as working spaces which require continual maintenance and face demands of infrastructural upgrading, ports remain difficult places to preserve and protect architectural heritage. They are also difficult places for the public to access and experience this built heritage first hand. Ports' efforts to increase efficiency can sometimes mean that historic infrastructures become, at best, a distraction, and at worst, unwanted. Current plans to redevelop Pembroke Dock as part of an attempt

to make it a centre of renewable energy production, for instance, have revealed how some of its listed structures – including historic slipways, a graving dock and a timber pond used for shipbuilding – may need to be infilled or covered over to undertake future developments. This example demonstrates the tensions that can exist within ports as they try to reconcile different and contrasting priorities – increasing efficiency and economic effectiveness, while also preserving port heritage. Campaigners point out the potential for a more productive relationship or close link between these two sets of priorities, with port heritage becoming part of the economic regeneration strategies for ports. This is the path that we have tried to chart in our project. But it is not an easy route to navigate, as ongoing debates around the preservation of port heritage in Pembroke Dock demonstrate.

Other forms of port heritage are more intangible. Throughout history, tens of thousands of people (often men) have worked in the ports of Holyhead, Dublin, Rosslare Harbour, Fishguard and Pembroke Dock, while millions of others have passed through these ports as passengers on trans-national journeys. The port towns have served as staging posts in the journeys of merchants, kings, soldiers, revolutionaries and politicians, as well as poets, authors, scientists and tourists throughout a long history of sometimes difficult and troubled relations, especially during periods of British occupation and rule in Ireland.

The same ports were points of passage for Irish migrants as they made their way to work in the UK and further afield, and British migrants settling in Ireland. The history of these ports may appear to be nationally tied or rooted, but the stories that gather around these ports – and their very existence and fortunes – are inseparable from the shared cultural, economic and political connections forged through journeys between and through Ireland and the UK. The port communities themselves reflect this rich heritage. Street, place and family names testify to the long-standing connections, and the identities of people living and working in these port towns often reflect these international links and hybrid, diasporic geographies. One of the most subtle yet striking examples of such connections is a story about the street whose house numbers start in Goodwick and end in Rosslare Harbour – a street that literally crosses the Irish Sea. The story has become something of an urban legend in both communities, and no one is sure whether it is true.

The story about this street points to an important finding of 'Ports, Past and Present', namely that it is all well and good to consider the heritage of each individual port – and indeed, Ireland and Wales – independently of one another, but it is also crucial to consider the shared heritage that connects the ports and nations through the political and economic ambitions, and trans-national journeys, which have shaped them. The films we have produced as part of 'Ports, Past and Present' highlight the ongoing significance of those cultural connections. What will the impact of Brexit be on these connections? In 2019, Ireland and the UK reaffirmed their commitment to the 'Common Travel Area' agreement which dates back to

February 1923, but Brexit has led to the reimposition of customs regulations between Great Britain and the island of Ireland, increasing the time, cost and paperwork of cross-border shipping.

Our aim in 'Ports, Past and Present' has been to foreground the shared cultural heritage of Ireland and Wales, and to use this as a way of engaging communities, increasing tourism opportunities, and helping to identify new employment opportunities in the tourism sector. There are, of course, limits to what can be achieved through a focus on port heritage. For instance, heritage tourism can only provide a partial solution to the fundamental social and economic challenges facing port communities, and there is a need for us to be aware of the potential, unintended consequences of heritage tourism and the port regeneration. On the one hand, encouraging international tourism, oil-based transport modes and cruise tourism might be seen to generate significant levels of carbon emissions. On the other hand, heritage tourism – if too successful – can contribute to a situation in which coastal communities become dominated by holiday lets and second homes. This is the case in the Pembrokeshire village of Cwm-yr-Eglwys, where a recent BBC report noted that only two out of the fifty properties have permanent residents, with the other houses being holiday lets and second homes. There are clearly limits to the role that heritage tourism can play in supporting the regeneration of port towns. The key here is to engage with communities to determine the kinds of tourism (including heritage tourism) that they would like to see operating within their communities. It is this regenerative form of heritage tourism – one that is owned by communities and benefits communities – that we have been trying to encourage in 'Ports, Past and Present.'

Broader policy implications

Our work in producing these films has helped to illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities that exist in the five port towns, as well as the cultural and natural heritage that exists within them. Our work has highlighted a series of policy implications and challenges for port communities, whether in relation to tourism, heritage or economic development. We have started to hint at some of these in the above paragraphs and we flesh them out in slightly more detail below.

Heritage policy

Our work on 'Ports, Past and Present' has shown that heritage policy in both Ireland and Wales is often territorial in its focus, in two senses. First, it is territorial in that heritage policy tends to focus on the heritage of the land (*terra*), with less attention given to the heritage of ports, coastlines and marine areas. In recent decades, attention has focused on the threat of coastal erosion towards coastal heritage assets, with Britain's National Trust – who own 157 miles of Welsh coast – adopting its controversial 'managed retreat' policy as early as 2005. However, coastal and maritime areas have rarely received the kinds of integrated spatial planning approach which has been applied to land-based territorial areas such as cities or

national parks, and it was only in November 2019 that the first integrated *Welsh National Marine Plan* was published, responding to the requirements enshrined in the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act of 2009 and European Union directive 2014/89/EU. Likewise, Ireland's *National Marine Planning Framework* was published by the Government of Ireland in July 2021. The *Welsh National Marine Plan* is intended to provide an integrated plan covering the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of marine areas, ensuring 'blue growth' occurs in a sustainable way. The plan – covering the zone from the high-water mark to the 12 nautical mile limit of territorial waters – recognises the importance of both tangible and intangible heritage to coastal communities in Wales, but there are still a lot of policy challenges ahead – including recognising how complex the relationship between territorial areas and marine areas is.

Second, heritage policy tends to be territorial in that it is centred on territorial states or regions, and their territorial claims on maritime waters (generally up to 12 nautical miles offshore). The Office of Public Works is responsible for the heritage of Ireland and CADW is responsible for the heritage of Wales. But who is responsible for the historic links and cultural heritage that connects Ireland and Wales? A quick answer might be that both nations should have or share this responsibility, but such shared connections – especially extra-territorial oceanic and submarine connections – are often ignored or underplayed as a result of the necessary and legislated focus of heritage bodies on their own clearly-delineated territories. Our work in 'Ports, Past and Present' – and the work conducted in a range of other Interreg operations such as 'Celtic Routes', 'Ancient Connections' and 'CHERISH' on the shared, cross-border and inter-regional heritage of Ireland and Wales – points to the need to coordinate heritage policy in more effective and far-reaching ways across national borders, including across the Irish Sea.

Tourism policy

Similar arguments can be made in relation to tourism policy. Current tourism policy tends to ignore port towns, focussing on tourism experiences along more picturesque stretches of coastline or inland. Should tourism policy emphasise the cultural riches that exist in the port towns of Ireland and Wales? More importantly, tourism policy in Ireland and Wales focuses on attracting tourists and visitors specifically to Ireland and Wales, respectively. Fáilte Ireland and Visit Wales – the two organisations responsible for promoting tourism in Ireland and Wales – are, in some senses, in competition with one another, emphasising tourism experiences that take in Ireland and Wales exclusively.

Our work in 'Ports, Past and Present' – as in other EU Interreg operations working on heritage and tourism – has highlighted the value of thinking about tourist experiences that connect the two nations. 'Ancient Connections' uses the historic pilgrimages between Ireland and Wales as a vehicle to promote contemporary tourist pilgrimages between the two countries. 'Coastal Uplands: Heritage and Tourism',

similarly, tries to promote tours and experiences that connect the different coastal uplands of the Cambrian, Preseli, Wicklow and Blackstairs Mountains. If these projects – and the EU programme of which they are a part – demonstrate the value in promoting tourist experiences that connect Ireland and Wales, what are the implications for tourism policies that are still largely nationally-focused, targeted on either Ireland or Wales? Should national governments focus on joint tourism strategies based on regional and trans-national tourism experiences, such as occurs with cruise operators who promote trans-national 'Celtic' cruise tours connecting Wales, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and often England. Is this an area where Fáilte Ireland and Visit Wales could work more closely together?

Territorial cooperation post-Brexit

Brexit has certainly changed the policy context within which our five ports – and more broadly, Ireland and Wales – operate. We have already indicated some of the ways in which Brexit has impacted negatively on the amount of traffic passing through the three Welsh ports, although the exact impact is difficult to assess, and these changes have often occurred alongside reductions in traffic as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Welsh Government have expressed concern that the emergence of a hard border and associated customs facilities in Welsh ports may discourage trade and displace port traffic elsewhere. At one level, this raises serious questions about the need for the ports themselves to work with the UK government and invest in the necessary infrastructure to deal with new border checks post-Brexit. There has been considerable investment in new customs infrastructures in Ireland. For instance, Dublin Port has invested some €30 million and re-purposed 10 hectares of land, including the construction of new customs posts and associated facilities. Similar developments have been conspicuous by their absence in the Welsh ports facing the Irish Sea, not least because of the fundamental practical issues that constrain their capacities to develop new infrastructures. The approach roads to the port and ferry terminal of Pembroke Dock, for instance, pass through the centre of the town along single-carriageway roads, making the erection of new border infrastructures challenging. Similarly, in Holyhead, the second busiest port in the UK, there is little space to invest in the infrastructure needed to process people and goods post-Brexit, which has resulted in the UK and Welsh governments establishing two inland border check-points at Parc Cybi on the A55 close to Holyhead – one is an HMRC Inland Border Facility (IBF), and the other is a planned border control post to inspect small animals, horses and plant produce.

Post-Brexit and post-COVID, reductions in port traffic at Wales's three ferry ports raise fundamental questions about alternative sources of income and investment in the port towns. While the establishment of border and customs facilities might generate new jobs, reductions in passenger numbers have fuelled concerns about the future viability of the less used ferry services, especially those from south Wales to Rosslare Harbour, highlighting the need to think of new ways to attract

tourists to Wales's port towns and coastal communities. Celebrating their distinctive heritage – as we have been doing in 'Ports, Past and Present' – provides one important way to achieve this aim.

The devolution of selected powers to the UK's constituent nations provides another set of complications and policy contexts to consider. The Welsh Government have indicated their willingness to forge a new relationship with Ireland post-Brexit, building on the valuable work that has been conducted as part of the EU's Interreg programme and emphasising the need for ongoing cooperation and collaboration between Ireland and Wales on a range of issues. Our work on 'Ports, Past and Present' has illustrated the value of thinking in more connected ways, particularly in relation to cultural heritage and tourism.

Social and economic regeneration

The final set of policy implications relates to attempts being made to promote social and economic development in Wales. One of the key mechanisms for investing in the South West Wales region is through the formation of the Swansea Bay 'city region.' However, concerns have been raised about the possibility that this new city region will lead to a relative disinvestment in those deprived communities located furthest from the core, i.e. communities such as Fishguard and Pembroke Dock. While city region authorities emphasise the importance of spreading prosperity westwards, concerns remain about the lack of emphasis that appears to be placed on addressing the social and development needs of port towns.

Additional issues arise around the way in which development priorities within port communities are being defined elsewhere and the potential for this to silence alternative visions for the future development of port towns. Concerns have been raised that Pembroke Dock is being envisioned as a site of renewable energy production – or 'internet of energy' – within the Swansea and South West Wales city region. While this will lead to a welcome investment of some £60 million in the port as part of the Pembroke Dock Marine programme, it has been criticised for marginalising other future visions of Pembroke Dock. Heritage tourism does not feature within this city region narrative, despite the riches that exist within the port and the town – and the potential for this to support social and economic regeneration. Our work with 'Ports, Past and Present' clearly demonstrates the enthusiasm that local stakeholders have for celebrating their history and heritage. While there is a social and cultural value to championing port heritage, those involved in shaping city region agendas should not underestimate the economic potential of such heritage visions.

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Notes

[i] See, for example, the work of: P.E. Steinberg (2001) *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; J. Anderson and K. Peters (eds) (2014) *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, Farnham: Ashgate; P. Bélanger P (ed) (2014) 'Wet matter' (special issue). *Harvard Design Magazine*, 39, pp.1-175; P. Steinberg and K. Peters (2015) 'Wet ontologies, fluid spaces: giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(2), pp.247–264; P. Vannini (2012) *Ferry Tales: Mobility, Place and Time on Canada's West Coast*. London: Routledge; J. Anderson, A. Davies, K. Peters and P. Steinberg (eds) (2022) *The Routledge Handbook of Ocean Space*, Abingdon: Routledge; K. Peters, E. Stratford and P. Steinberg (2018) (eds) *Territory Beyond Terra*, London: Rowman and Littlefield.

[ii] M. Hesse and E. McDonough (2018) Ports, cities and the global maritime infrastructure, in Kloosterman, R.C., Mamadouh, V. and Terhorst, P. (eds) *Handbook on the Geographies of Globalization*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

[iii] T. Birtchnell, S. Savitzky and J. Urry (eds) (2015) *Cargomobilities: Moving Materials in a Global Age*. London: Routledge.

[vi] C.A. Thoresen (2003) *Port Designer's Handbook*. London: Thomas Telford.

[v] In Dublin, this led to the construction of the Dublin Port Tunnel, which was opened to traffic in December 2006. The tunnel cost around €752 million and channels both HGV and car traffic from the port northwards, away from the city centre and towards the M50 ring road (see https://dublintunnel.ie/about-dublin-tunnel/).

[iv] S. Palmer (1999) Current port trends in an historical perspective, *Journal for Maritime Research* 1(1), pp.99-111.

[vii] Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019 (available at: https://www.gov.wales/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation-full-index-update-ranks-2019)

[viii] S. Carswell (2022) 'Brexit ends "landbridge" route as Dublin Port records sharp fall in lorry freight,' *The Irish Times*, 21 January.

[ix] BBC (2021) 'Pembroke Dock energy project "could be catastrophic",' 17 March, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56435198; BBC (2021) 'Pembroke Dock energy project benefits "'outweigh"' heritage loss,' 18 May, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-57156086

[x] BBC (2021) 'Pembrokeshire village has more holiday homes than residents,' 2 June, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-57322524

[xi] Of course, some heritage policies do focus on ports and coasts, e.g. CADW (2020) *Managing the Marine Historic Environment of Wales*, Cardiff: Welsh Government; CADW (1999) *Caring for Coastal Heritage*, Cardiff: CADW.

[xii] National Trust (2005) *Shifting Shores: Living with a Changing Coastline*, London: The National Trust; H. Geoghegan and C.S. Leyshon (2014) *Shifting Shores*: Managing Challenge and Change on the Lizard Peninsula, Cornwall, UK, *Landscape Research*, 39(6), pp.631-646.

[xiii] Welsh Government (2019) *Welsh National Marine Plan*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.

[xiv] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2021) *National Marine Planning Framework*, Dublin: Government of Ireland https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60e57-national-marine-planning-framework/

[xv] S. Carswell (2019) '"This is the border": Dublin Port, Ireland's ground zero for Brexit,' *The Irish Times*, 18 January.

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