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Dublin Core

Title

Rebels and Revolutionaries | Gwrthryfelwyr a Chwyldroadwyr

Subject

Fishguard

French Invasion 1797

Welsh History

Creator

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Publisher

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/DWY8-4LSS>

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English and Welsh

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Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Title (Welsh)

Gwrthryfelwyr a Chwyldroadwyr

Subtitle

Irish Sea journeys in the 1790s

Subtitle (Welsh)

Mordeithiau Môr Iwerddon yn y 1790au

Lede

The landing of French soldiers near Fishguard in 1797 has been remembered as the Last Invasion of Britain. | Glaniad y Ffrancwyr yn Sir Benfro ym mis Chwefror 1797 oedd y tro olaf i filwyr y gelyn lanio ar dir Prydain.

Lede (Welsh)

Glaniad y Ffrancwyr yn Sir Benfro ym mis Chwefror 1797 oedd y tro olaf i filwyr y gelyn lanio ar dir Prydain.

Story

The ‘Last Invasion of Britain’: was the last occasion on which enemy troops set foot on British soil. It took place in the context of other planned, but unsuccessful, landings in Ireland and other parts of the British coast, which the French hoped would distract and weaken the British forces. The following year French troops did land at Killala Bay on the west coast of Ireland, too late to support an Irish uprising aimed at throwing off British power. In Ireland there was considerable support for the French, not only from the United Irishmen but from large areas of the rural, Catholic population, whose lives were severely and often cruelly restricted under British rule. Welsh radicals supportive of the ideals of the revolution did not have a similar network, nor a similar groundswell of support. Memories and traditions recollecting the ‘Year of the French’ are thus markedly different in Wales and Ireland.

On the afternoon of 22 February 1797, weeks after a failed attempt to land French soldiers at Bantry Bay on the west coast of Ireland, General Lazare Hoche sent a fleet from Brest under the command of Irish-American William Tate. The aim was to attack the west coast of Britain and distract the government from sending reinforcements to Ireland. Unable to land near Bristol, the four warships continued up St George’s Channel and anchored off the point of Carregwastad just south of Fishguard.

Through the night of 22 February 1797 some 1250 soldiers, arms, supplies and munitions were brought ashore here. Known as the Légion Noire (‘Black Legion’) because they wore re-used British uniforms dyed in dark colours, they were a mixture of trained soldiers and irregulars, including convicts and deserters. This impressive operation – the coast here is incredibly steep and rocky – initiated a series of events culminating in a French surrender two days later. A now weathered memorial stone was erected here in 1897.

The French landing set off a panic described by a witness ‘fel tan gwyllt yn difa sofr’ (‘like a wildfire burning up stubble’). On 23 February the French troops took over Trehowel farm and Tate set up his base there. The hungry soldiers had unrestrained access to the well-stocked larders and cellars of the owner, John Mortimer: this was widely believed to have contributed to a rapid breakdown in discipline. A local ballad describes them:

Dwyn yr yde o’r ysguborie

A gwartheg a’r lloie’n llu;

Mynd i’r seleri (naws hwyl arw)

[I] gael cwrw croyw cry’.

They stole the corn from the barn
And many cattle and calves
Went down to the cellars
To get bright strong beer.

Tate sent envoys to Fishguard to negotiate a conditional surrender. The British forces declined Tate's offer and insisted on a complete surrender, giving the French troops until 10 am the following day to comply. On the morning of the 24 February the French soldiers were brought around the head in boats and laid down their arms in formal surrender. They were then marched to prison in Haverfordwest, where a contemporary witness describes them as hungry and confused. Tate and many of the invading force were eventually exchanged for British prisoners. James Baker's striking images of the troops gathered on Goodwick Sands appeared very soon after the event, and the site of the 'Last Invasion' rapidly became a tourist attraction.

Story (Welsh)

Glanïad y Ffrancwyr oedd y tro olaf i filwyr y gelyn lanio ar dir Prydain. Digwyddodd y glaniad yng nghyd-destun glaniadau eraill arfaethedig, ond aflwyddiannus, yn Iwerddon a rhannau eraill o arfordir Prydain, roedd y Ffrancwyr yn gobeithio y bydden nhw'n tynnu sylw ac yn gwanhau lluoedd Prydain. Y flwyddyn wedyn glaniodd milwyr Ffrainc ym Mae Killala ar arfordir gorllewin Iwerddon, yn rhy hwyr i gefnogi gwrthryfel oedd yn ceisio rhyddhau'r wlad o ormes Prydain. Yn Iwerddon roedd cryn gefnogaeth i'r Ffrancwyr, nid yn unig gan y Gwyddelod Unedig ond gan rannau helaeth o'r boblogaeth wledig, Gatholig, oedd wedi gweld eu bywydau'n cael eu cyfyngu'n ddifrifol ac yn aml yn greulon o dan reolaeth Prydain. Doedd gan y radicaliaid o Gymry oedd yn gefnogol i ddelfrydau'r chwyldro ddim rhwydwaith tebyg, na chefnidir tebyg. Gan hynny, mae'r atgofion a'r traddodiadau sy'n dwyn i gof 'Blwyddyn y Ffrancwyr' yn bur wahanol yng Nghymru ac Iwerddon.

Ar brynhawn 22 Chwefror 1797, wythnosau ar ôl ymgais aflwyddiannus milwyr Ffrainc i lanio ym Mae Bantry ar arfordir gorllewin Iwerddon, anfonodd y Cadfridog Lazare Hoche lynges o Brest dan ofal y Gwyddel Americanaidd William Tate. Y nod oedd ymosod ar arfordir gorllewin Prydain a thynnu sylw'r llywodraeth rhag anfon rhagor o filwyr i Iwerddon. Wedi methu â glanio ger Bryste, hwyliodd y pedair llong ryfel ymlaen i Fôr Iwerddon ac angori oddi ar drwyn Carregwastad ychydig i'r de o Abergwaun.

Drwy'r nos ar 22 Chwefror 1797 daeth rhyw 1250 o filwyr, arfau, cyflenwadau, bwledi ac ati i'r lan yma. Roedd y milwyr hyn yn cael eu hadnabod fel y Légion Noire ('y Llent Ddu') am eu bod yn gwisgo lifrai Brydeinig wedi'i hailddefnyddio ac wedi'i lliwio'n dywyll, ac yn cynnwys cymysgedd o filwyr wedi'u hyfforddi a rhai afreolaidd, gan gynnwys carcharorion ac ymgilwyr. Arweiniodd y cyrch trawiadol yma – mae'r arfordir yma'n hynod serth a chreigiog – at gyfres o ddigwyddiadau a ddaeth i ben pan ildiodd y Ffrancwyr ddau ddiwrnod wedyn. Cafodd carreg goffa sydd bellach wedi hindreulio ei chodi yma ym 1897.

Yn sgil glaniad y Ffrancwyr cafwyd panig a ddisgrifiwyd gan un tyst 'fel tan gwyllt yn difa sofr'. Ar 23 Chwefror cipiodd milwyr Ffrainc fferm Trehowel ac yno y sefydlodd Tate ei ganolfan. Cafodd y milwyr newynog rwydd hynt i ysbeilio pantri a seleri llawn y perchennog, John Mortimer: credid yn gyffredinol bod hyn wedi cyfrannu at gollu pob disgyblaeth a hynny'n gyflym. Mae baled leol yn eu disgrifio nhw:

Dwyn yr yde o'r ysguborie
A gwartheg a'r lloie'n llu;
Mynd i'r seleri (naws hwyl arw)
[I] gael cwrw croyw cry'.

Anfonodd Tate genhadon i Abergwaun i drafod ildiad amodol. Gwrthod cynnig Tate wnaeth lluoedd Prydain gan fynnu ei fod yn ildio'n llwyr, gan roi tan 10 o'r gloch fore trannoeth i filwyr Ffrainc gydymffurfio. Ar fore 24 Chwefror daethpwyd â'r milwyr Ffrengig o amgylch y pentir mewn cychod a chafodd eu harfau eu gollwng mewn ildiad ffurfiol. Wedyn cawsant eu gorymdeithio i garchar Hwlfordd, lle mae un tyst cyfoes yn eu disgrifio fel rhai newynog a dryslyd. Yn y pen draw, cafodd Tate a llawer o'r milwyr eu cyfnewid am garcharorion Prydeinig. Ymddangosodd delweddau trawiadol James Baker o'r milwyr ar Draeth Wdig yn fuan iawn ar ôl y digwyddiad, a buan iawn y daeth safle 'Glaniad y Ffrancwyr' yn atyniad i dwristiaid.

Related Resources

For further reading on the period and the French landing at Carregwastad see the [Wales and the French Revolution](#) website.

Hywel M. Davies, 'Terror, Treason and Tourism: The French in Pembrokeshire, 1797', in *Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt: Essays on Wales and the French Revolution*, ed. Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 247–70.

Ffion Mair Jones ed., *Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).