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## Dublin Core

### Title

Richard Fenton

### Subject

Richard Fenton

Fishguard

Abergwaun

Antiquarianism

Hynafiaeth

### Creator

Natasha de Chroustchhoff

### Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

### Date

2023

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### Relation

<https://perma.cc/2TXR-KF5C>

### Format

Curatescape story

### Language

English

Welsh

### Coverage

51.993584442772566, -4.964175728789075

## Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

### Lede

The Fenton family were active in Fishguard for several generations and they made quite an impression on the town.

### Lede (Welsh)

Bu teulu Fenton yn weithgar yn Abergwaun dros sawl cenhedlaeth, gan wneud cryn argraff ar y dref.

### Story

The first member of the Fenton family to arrive in Fishguard - in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century - was Lieutenant Samuel Fenton, a naval officer who transformed the fortunes of a fishing village so dependent on the local catch that its inhabitants were known as *Sgadan Abergwaun* – Fishguard herrings. The well-travelled Samuel spotted that if the fish were cured in the Mediterranean style they could be traded to the continent. He had the harbour enlarged with a solid stone breakwater, quay and warehouse. Business boomed and for a while the fisher folk had money to jingle. So did Samuel: when an American privateer captured one of his ships he had to pay £1000 ransom to stop a bombardment of cannon balls – not before his sister was wounded. Alas, in 1799 the herring shoals moved away, never to return.

Richard Fenton arrived in Fishguard towards the end of his Uncle Samuel's life. Born in St David's in 1747, Richard was well educated in Oxford and London where he became acquainted with some of the best known figures on the cultural scene including the writers Oliver Goldsmith and Samuel Butler, the painter Joshua Reynolds and the actor David Garrick. It's said he met his wife when strolling through the London streets with Goldsmith. Passing a garden where a tea party was in full swing. Romantic Richard spotted a pretty girl and declared that he would marry her - if he could only meet her! His friend boldly walked in and greeted the host as an old acquaintance despite never having seen him before. Rather than commit a social gaffe the host warmly welcomed them and thus Richard met his future wife. Her name was Eloise and she was the daughter of a Swiss aristocrat.

After practicing as a barrister in North Wales and having three sons with Eloise, Richard moved his family to Fishguard in 1793. When his uncle died three years later Richard Fenton was the main beneficiary and he set out to build a fine gentleman's residence. The site chosen was a meadow beside the winding river Gwaun above the harbour. With a nod to his wife's heritage Richard designed a small continental-style mansion which he named Plas Glynamel: 'honey vale' in poor Welsh. According to the fashion of the day he devised a romantic setting: the steep valley side was blasted away to create a terrain of rocky outcrops, winding paths, secret grottoes and a hermit's cell – complete with a hired hermit. Specimen trees were planted along the river. It was an ideal landscape in which to entertain his artistic and literary friends.

The house completed, Richard Fenton embarked on an ambitious new project: *A Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire*, published in 1811. This impressive volume covers his twelve itineraries around the county describing towns and villages, grand gentry houses (whose hospitality he enjoyed as a guest), and ancient ruins and remains. Some of these he excavated himself and his identification from scattered tile fragments of a Roman villa site has been recently been proved correct.

When Richard Fenton died in 1821 aged 75 a friend eulogized him as “a man of indefatigable industry, of a fine poetical fancy, of a very cheerful disposition... and the person of best information on almost every subject.”

When building his mansion, Richard Fenton was cursed in Welsh by a local woman, Anne Eynon. His uncle Samuel, to whom she had been a housekeeper, had promised the lifetime use of a field and a cottage which Richard had, unwittingly, absorbed into his new estate. Although he made full recompense to her, Richard was very disturbed by the incident and indeed her prophecy that the property would pass out of his family's ownership with the third of his line proved correct when his grandson Reginald - a big game hunter in South Africa - died in 1924, 100 years after Richard Fenton's death.

### Story (Welsh)

Yr aelod cyntaf o deulu Fenton i gyrraedd Abergwaun – tua diwedd y 18fed ganrif – oedd Is-gapten Samuel Fenton, swyddog llynges a drawsnewidiodd hanes pentref pysgota a oedd mor ddibynol ar y ddalfa leol fel y galwyd ei drigolion yn *Sgadan Abergwaun*. Roedd Samuel wedi teithio cryn dipyn, a sylweddolodd y byddai modd masnachu'r pysgod ar y cyfandir pe baent yn cael eu cochi yn arddull Môr y Canoldir. Trefnodd bod yr harbwr yn cael ei ymestyn trwy osod morglawdd o garreg solet, cei a warws yno. Bu'r busnes yn hynod lwyddiannus ac am gyfnod, roedd gan y pysgotwyr dipyn o arian yn eu pocedi. Roedd gan Samuel arian hefyd: pan gipiwyd un o'i longau gan herwlong o America, bu'n rhaid iddo dalu pridwerth o £1000 er mwyn atal y pelenni canon rhag taro – ond nid cyn i'w chwaer gael ei hanafu. Gwaetha'r modd, symudodd yr heigiau sgadan i ffwrdd ym 1799, ac ni wnaethant fyth ddychwelyd.

Cyrhaeddodd Richard Fenton Abergwaun yn ystod blynyddoedd olaf ei Ewythr Samuel. Ganwyd Richard yn Nhyddewi ym 1747 a chafodd addysg dda yn Rhydychen ac yn Llundain, lle y bu'n treulio amser yng nghwmni rhai o unigolion mwyaf adnabyddus cylchoedd diwylliannol yr oes, gan gynnwys yr awduron Oliver Goldsmith a Samuel Butler, yr arlunydd Joshua Reynolds a'r actor David Garrick. Dywedir ei fod wedi cyfarfod ei wraig pan yn crwydro strydoedd Llundain gyda Goldsmith. Roeddent wedi cerdded heibio gardd lle'r oedd te-parti yn cael ei gynnal. Gwelodd Richard ferch brydferth, ac fel dyn rhamantus, datganodd y byddai'n ei phriodi – pe byddai modd iddo ei chyfarfod! Cerddodd ei ffrind i mewn yn feiddgar, gan gyfarch y sawl a oedd yn cynnal y te-parti fel pe bai'n hen gydnabod iddo, er nad oedd erioed wedi ei weld o'r blaen. Yn hytrach na chymryd cam gwag cymdeithasol, estynnodd y dyn groeso cynnes iddynt, felly cyfarfu Richard â'r ferch y byddai'n ei phriodi. Ei henw oedd Eloise ac roedd hi'n ferch aristocrat o'r Swistir.

Ar ôl gweithio fel bargyfreithiwr yng Ngogledd Cymru a chael tri mab gydag Eloise, symudodd Richard ei deulu i Abergwaun ym 1793. Pan fu farw ei ewythr dair blynedd yn ddiweddarach, Richard Fenton oedd y prif fuddiolwr ac aeth ati i adeiladu cartref braf a oedd yn addas i fonheddwr. Y safle a ddewiswyd oedd dŵl gerllaw afon droellog Gwaun uwchben yr harbwr. Gan gadw treftadaeth ei wraig mewn cof, adeiladodd Richard blasty bychan mewn arddull cyfandirol a'i enwi yn Blas Glynamel: 'dyffryn mêl' mewn Cymraeg gwael. Yn unol â ffasiwn y cyfnod, aeth ati i gynllunio lleoliad rhamantaidd: chwythwyd ochr serth y dyffryn i ffwrdd i greu tirwedd creigiog, llwybrau troellog, ogofannau cudd a chell meudwy

– a oedd yn cynnwys meudwy cyflogedig. Plannwyd coed nodweddiadol ar hyd yr afon. Roedd yn dirlun delfrydol er mwyn diddanu ei ffrindiau artistig a llenyddol.

Ar ôl cwblhau'r tŷ, cychwynnodd Richard Fenton ar brosiect newydd uchelgeisiol: *A Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire*, a gyhoeddwyd ym 1811. Mae'r gyfrol drawiadol hon yn cynnwys ei ddeuddeg taith o gwmpas y sir, gan ddisgrifio trefi a phentrefi, tai bonedd crand (y bu'n mwynhau eu lletygarwch fel gwestai), ac adfeilion ac olion hynafol. Cloddiodd rai o'r rhain ei hun ac yn ddiweddar, profwyd bod ei gred ei fod wedi darganfod darnau o deils gwasgareddig fila Rhufeinig yn gywir.

Pan fu farw Richard Fenton yn 75 oed ym 1821, nododd ffrind iddo mewn molawd ei fod yn “ddyn gyda diwydrwydd diflino, dychymyg barddonol campus, cymeriad siriol iawn...ac unigolyn a oedd yn meddu ar y wybodaeth orau am bron unrhyw bwnc.”

Pan oedd yn adeiladu ei blasty, melltithiwyd Richard Fenton yn Gymraeg gan fenyw leol, Anne Eynon. Roedd ei ewythr Samuel, yr oedd hi wedi bod yn feistres tŷ iddo, wedi addo y byddai hi'n cael defnyddio cae a bwthyn am weddill ei hoes, ond yn ddiarwybod iddo, roedd Richard wedi cynnwys hwn yn ei ystad newydd. Er ei fod wedi talu iawndal llawn iddi, roedd Richard yn teimlo'n anesmwyth iawn am y digwyddiad ac yn wir, am ei phroffwydoliaeth na fyddai'r eiddo yn aros yn ei deulu, a daeth hyn yn wir pan fu farw ei ŵyr, Reginald – heliwr helfilod mawr yn Ne Affrica – ym 1924, 100 mlynedd ar ôl marwolaeth Richard Fenton.

### **Factoid**

The old harbour in Lower Town is a pleasant place to visit: highly photogenic, with a pub (The Ship) close by and a café and ice cream van in summer. Freshly caught fish sometimes available!

Mae'r hen harbwr yn y Dref Isaf yn lle hyfryd i ymweld ag ef: ffotogenig iawn, ac mae tafarn (Y Ship) gerllaw, ynghyd â chaffi a fan hufen iâ yn ystod yr haf. Weithiau, bydd pysgod ffres sydd newydd gael eu dal ar gael!

### **Related Resources**

A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire by Richard Fenton, 1810,  
<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bz76fh54/items?canvas=12>

North, F. J., (1959). FENTON, RICHARD (1747 - 1821), poet and topographical writer. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2021, from  
<https://biography.wales/article/s-FENT-RIC-1747>, archived at <https://perma.cc/S9J9-PNHK>

Dilywn Miles, "Pembrokeshire Antiquarians", *Pembrokeshire Historical Society*,  
<http://www.pembrokeshirehistoricalsociety.co.uk/pembrokeshire-antiquarians/>, archived at  
<https://perma.cc/5YZ5-HEK9>

Mark Merrony, "Some Thoughts on the Romanization of Pembrokeshire", *Pembrokehire Historical Society*, <http://www.pembrokeshirehistoricalsociety.co.uk/thoughts-romanization-pembrokeshire/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/84MD-SXGE>

### **Official Website**

[Duchas.ie](http://Duchas.ie)