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Dublin Core

Title

The North Atlantic and a Galaxy Far Far Away | Gogledd yr Atlantig a Galaeth Ymhell Bell i Ffwrdd

Subject

Pembroke Dock

Model Making

Millennium Falcon

Doc Penfro

Gwneud Modelau

1970s

Creator

Rhys Jones

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/23PD-8PRG>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

51.69304217317849, -4.9488301227741225

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Pembroke Dock possesses two important and related claims to fame when it comes to flying, albeit flying in contrasting contexts: flying boats and the Millennium Falcon!

Lede (Welsh)

Mae gan Ddoc Penfro ddau beth y gall ymfalchïo ynddynt sy'n gysylltiedig â hedfan, er bod y ddau yn bur wahanol i'w gilydd, sef cychod hedfan a'r Millennium Falcon!

Story

A current ferry port and a former naval dockyard isn't the first place you might think about visiting if you were interested in the history and heritage of flying. But Pembroke Dock possesses two important and related claims to fame when it comes to flying, albeit flying in contrasting contexts.

The two forms of flying heritage revolve around the same location, namely the massive hangars built in the first place to house Royal Air Force flying boats, which were stationed in Pembroke Dock from 1930 onwards. The RAF's base in Pembroke Dock grew throughout the decade. By 1943, 99 Sunderland and Catalina flying boats were housed in these hangars and they played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic. Indeed, during this period, Pembroke Dock was the largest flying boat base in the world.

Jump forward to 1979 and the same hangars played a crucial role in enabling another kind of flight; namely the construction of arguably the most famous space ship from the Star Wars franchise, Han Solo's Millennium Falcon. The space ship may have notably completed the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs but its beginnings were far humbler; in a large shed in a port town in West Wales! For the first film in the series – first in terms of production date – a mock-up of the Millennium Falcon was used but by the time that filming had started for the second film, *The Empire Strikes Back*, it was decided to create a life-sized model of the ship. Due to the size of the old flying boat hangars and due to the expertise of local engineering company Marcon Fabrications in producing large metal items for the oil facilities at nearby Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock was chosen as the site to build the famous space ship.

Luckily for visitors to Pembroke Dock, there are physical reminders of the role that the town has played in the history of flight. The massive Western Sunderland Hangar – where the flying boats were housed and where the Millennium Falcon was constructed – is still standing on Admiralty Way, the main approach road for cars and coaches to embark the Pembroke Dock to Rosslare ferry. The hangar can also be viewed from the deck of the Pembroke Dock to Rosslare ferry on the southern side of the estuary.

And for those wanting to discover a little more about the history of Pembroke Dock's role, both in the second world war and in a Hollywood blockbuster, additional information can be

found in Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre is located in the impressive old Dockyard Chapel on Meyrick Owen Way, handily located once again on the approach to the ferry terminal. The Heritage Centre is run by the Sunderland Trust and contains a large display of the role played by flying boats during the second world war. And, for Star Wars geeks, it also contains a display explaining Pembroke Dock's role in facilitating another kind of flying; a fictional one in a galaxy far, far away...

Story (Welsh)

Mae'n debyg nad porthladd fferi prysur a hen iard longau fyddai'r lleoedd cyntaf y byddech yn meddwl ymweld â nhw pe bai gennych ddi-ddordeb yn hanes a threftadaeth hedfan. Ond mae gan Ddoc Penfro ddau gysylltiad pwysig â hedfan, er bod cyd-destun y naill yn wahanol iawn i'r llall.

Mae'r ddau beth yn gysylltiedig â'r un man, sef y siediau anferth a godwyd yn y lle cyntaf i ddal cychod hedfan y Llu Awyr Brenhinol a gedwid yn Noc Penfro o 1930 ymlaen. Tyfodd ac ehangodd canolfan yr awyrlu gydol y degawd. Erbyn 1943 roedd 99 o gychod hedfan Sunderland a Catalina yn cael eu cadw yn y siediau hyn, a chwaraeodd y rheini ran hanfodol ym mrwydr yr Atlantig. Yn wir, yn ystod y cyfnod hwn, yn Noc Penfro yr oedd y ganolfan cychod hedfan fwyaf yn y byd.

Ym 1979 chwaraeodd yr un siediau rôl allweddol mewn hediad o fath tra gwahanol, gan mai yma yr adeiladwyd llong ofod enwocaf o bosibl y gyfres Star Wars, sef Millennium Falcon Han Solo. Mae honno'n nodedig am iddi gwblhau'r Kessel Run mewn llai na 12 parsec ond roedd ei dechreuadau yn llawer mwy di-nod, mewn sied fawr mewn tref borthladd yng ngorllewin Cymru! Yn y ffilm gyntaf yn y gyfres – y gyntaf o ran dyddiad cynhyrchu – model ffug bychan a ddefnyddiwyd o'r Millennium Falcon, ond erbyn iddynt ddechrau ffilmio'r ail, The Empire Strikes Back, roeddid wedi penderfynu creu model maint llawn. Ac oherwydd maint yr hen siediau cychod hedfan ac arbenigedd y cwmni peirianeg lleol Marcon Fabrications wrth gynhyrchu a chyflenwi eitemau metel mawr i'r cyfleusterau olew yn Aberdaugleddau, nid nepell i ffwrdd, penderfynwyd mai Doc Penfro oedd y lle perffaith i adeiladu'r 'hebog' enwog.

Yn ffodus i'r sawl sy'n ymweld â Doc Penfro, mae yna olion gweladwy o rôl y dref yn yr hanes. Mae sied anferth y Western Sunderland – lle y cedwid y cychod hedfan a lle'r adeiladwyd y Millennium Falcon – yn dal i sefyll ar Admiralty Way, y ffordd yr aiff y rhan fwyaf o geir a bysus hyd-ddi wrth fynd i gyfeiriad y fferi i Ros Láir (Rosslare). Gellir gweld y sied hefyd, ar ochr ddeheuol yr aber, o ddec y fferi ei hun.

Ac i'r rheini sydd am ddysgu ychydig mwy am hanes Doc Penfro yn yr Ail Ryfel Byd ac wedyn yn Star Wars, ceir gwybodaeth bellach yng Nghanolfan Treftadaeth Doc Penfro. Cartref y ganolfan yw hen gapel trawiadol y dociau ar Meyrick Owen Way, sydd unwaith eto'n gyfleus wrth i chi deithio i gyfeiriad y fferi. Ymddiriedolaeth Sunderland sy'n cynnal y ganolfan, ac mae'n cynnwys arddangosfa fawr sy'n edrych ar rôl y cychod hedfan yn yr Ail Ryfel Byd. Ac, ar gyfer ffans Star Wars, ceir arddangosfa arall sy'n adlewyrchu rhan Doc Penfro mewn math tra gwahanol o hedfan; math ffuglennol, mewn galaeth ymhell bell i ffwrdd...

Factoid

Related Resources

Pembroke Dock West Hangar, Coflein, <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/127657/details/flying-boat-station-pembroke-dock-west-hangar>

Sharron Harris (Director) and Andy Brindley (Producer), Code Name Magic Roundabout" (Film), 2016, <https://filmfreeway.com/1360153>

"Millennium Falcon was Pembroke Dock's 'best kept secret'", *BBC News*, 19 November 2016, archived at <https://perma.cc/K5LK-U7L3>

David Owens, "The story of how the Millennium Falcon was built in Wales has been turned into a stage play", *Wales Online*, 3 February, 2018, archived at <https://perma.cc/SRZ5-MQGX>

Official Website

<https://www.sunderlandtrust.com/>