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**‘A controversial and complex man’¹. How
has Welsh public opinion reflected the rise
and fall of Sir Thomas Picton? (1758-1815)
From his trial for torture in 1806 to today’s
contentious monuments.**

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¹ Robert Harries & Ian Lewis., ‘Monument to 'war hero' linked to slave trade to stay put in Carmarthen after public vote’, *Wales Online*, 1 September 2021. Available at [Monument to 'war hero' linked to slave trade to stay put in Carmarthen after public vote - Wales Online](#), Accessed 28 Feb 2022.

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Introduction

Sir Thomas Picton, born in 1758 of Haverfordwest in the Welsh county of Pembrokeshire, is mostly known for his actions in the Peninsular Wars (1807-1814) and being the highest ranking officer to die at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. He has the unique honour of being the only Welshman to have been buried in St. Paul's Cathedral where he now lies close to his commander the Duke of Wellington, after requests for a more fitting burial for a 'hero' in 1859.² For the most part, Picton has been viewed with national pride as a symbol of military heroism, prompting calls for monuments and other such focal points to aid the keeping of this pride and his memory alive. However, this reputation was only built in the five years preceding his death, while lurking in his past is a dark period of scandal, which for many years seems to have been swept under the carpet in favour of more honourable deeds. His connections to slavery and arrest for authorising the use of torture during his time as Governor of Trinidad (1797-1803) for which he never served punishment due to a technicality,³ have seen this long-dead soldier make the papers once again in today's climate of retribution for past injustices carried out in the name of imperialism. For some, statues, monuments, portraits and so on of people like Picton are seen as glorification of colonialism and all atrocities with which it is associated and therefore should be removed. This then leads to counter-arguments for the preservation of history, for keeping a monument means keeping a reminder and therefore an education on these topics. With this in mind, it is important to study the background of such characters, to decipher the twists and turns of their actions and subsequent reactions from their peers and successive generations at different periods in time, in order to reach an understanding of changing perceptions. Therefore, this dissertation will

² Robert Havard, *Wellington's Welsh General, A Life of Sir Thomas Picton* (London, 1996) pp. 252-254.

³ James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*, 2012, ProQuest Ebook Central available at : [ProQuest Ebook Central - Detail page](#) (accessed 11 April 2022)

seek to uncover as far as possible, the Welsh reaction to the deeds and misdeeds of one of their most famous countrymen, from his trial in 1806 to the present day.

Whilst it is not possible to study opinions of such a topic on a detailed and individual scale, the study of the popular press and other primary sources at various points should give an overall reflection of the public mood, especially when coupled with contemporary secondary sources which will also highlight the changing historiography. The revision of attitudes from the general public and within the historiography will become apparent throughout the study of various time periods. Earlier accounts would have us believe that slave and plantation owning Picton was himself a victim, with jealous rivals and conspiracies being a running theme from the earlier news stories to much later biographical articles. As late as 1945 opinions that the charges over the use of torture of a 'loose woman'⁴ being unjustified were in print and it was not until relatively recently that literature takes a more Picton-critical approach, perhaps in the last thirty or so years. Doctor Robert Havard of the University of Wales noted in his 1996 biography that there had only been two previous major biographies, the first in 1835 by H.B Robinson mainly uses Picton's own correspondence to create an image of the man in a very positive light,⁵ the other, a 1980 'strictly military history' written by Frederick Myatt. The lack of earlier twentieth century Picton literature other than that aimed at military history enthusiasts speaks loudest by its absence, of the scarcity of interest in the individual and the crimes of Britain's colonial past. Much could be said beyond this brief analysis of the events which have led Britain to be a more enlightened nation willing to take ownership of and explore the cruelty and inherent racism on which its former empire

⁴ Henry Pryce, 'Some Famous Welsh Leaders in War', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1945) p.148. available at: <https://journals.library.wales/view/1386666/1412891/147#?xywh=-1615%2C-1%2C5643%2C3721> (Accessed 16 April 2022)

⁵ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. p. viii

was built. Picton's trial came at an important time for the abolition of slavery, movements had been steadily gaining pace and the international trade was ended by Britain the following year. Yet still it would take much of the twentieth century, the decline of empire and the rise of civil rights movements for a shift in attitudes. However, suffice to say studies of Britain's past methods have become ever more critical over the last few decades and increasingly so in the last few years. Whilst Havard's biography does in no way excuse Picton's actions, it is more of an entertaining yet useful run through of Picton's life written as an extension of the authors own interests as Wales Universitie's reader of Spanish, sparked by Picton's presence in many familiar Spanish locations.⁶ Later works are more focused on the issues of slavery, politics and the British system of colonial rule such as Professor of History at Vanderbilt University James Epstein's 2012 *Scandal of Colonial Rule : Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*,⁷ an in-depth academic study of British rule under Picton and how the revelations from Trinidad of the realities of empire were received back in Britain. Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford's 2018 article, 'Island Despotism: Trinidad, the British Imperial Constitution and Global Legal Order'⁸ is a specific study of British law and the issues of its imperial legal system when dealing with far-flung colonies, using Picton's governance of Trinidad as a case study. A much broader approach to the issue of slavery and Wales's little known involvement comes from Chris Evans, Professor of History, University of South Wales in his 2010 book *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery, 1660-1850*.⁹ A topic which does not appear to have been tackled in any depth however is how Picton was perceived by the Welsh public, a gap in the historiography this dissertation hopes to fill by

⁶ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. p. vii

⁷ Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*.

⁸ Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, 'Island Despotism: Trinidad, the British Imperial Constitution and Global Legal Order' *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history*, (2018) Vol.46 (1), pp.21-46 [Online] Available at: <https://www-tandfonline-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/03086534.2017.1379671> (Accessed 09 April)

⁹ Chris Evans, *Slave Wales : The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery, 1660-1850*. (University of Wales Press, 2010). pp. 69 – 78.

reviewing the changes to these sentiments which seems especially relevant given the current calls for adjustments to perspectives in regards to such people as Picton. In order to assess the public mood, a study will first be conducted of reactions to his trial and then to his actions up until the time of his death. Following that, the response and support for monuments to his memory will be looked at before moving on the modern interpretations of his past and subsequent memorials, before a synopsis of the findings and a closing comment on the question of whether someone can be a 'hero and villain' at the same time, that is to say, can their bad deeds cancel out their good?

Chapter 1: Trinidad to Waterloo

Robert Havard opens his 1996 biography by stating that although Picton is ‘...likely Wales’s greatest soldier. Yet not the shining paragon of whom a nation can be unreservedly proud.’¹⁰ He is of course referring to Picton’s chequered past as governor of Britain’s newly acquired colony on the island of Trinidad. Picton was Trinidad’s first British governor, a position he gained through personal acquaintances rather than merit or experience at the age of thirty nine, after a lengthy period of inactivity for a military man.¹¹ Commandeering the island from the Spanish, Picton arrived at a nervous time for such colonies which relied heavily on slave-labour and therefore had a substantial slave population which greatly outnumbered the white overseers.¹² Violent slave rebellions had taken place on neighbouring colonies in recent years such as the Haitian revolt of 1789, sparking fears of similar occurrences. The atrocities committed under Picton’s rule were numerous and abhorrent, including but not limited to, the burning alive and dismemberment of slaves as well as the execution without trial of others including British soldiers.¹³ Jak Peake summarises the possible reasons for such drastic punishments in the book *Between the Bocas*, chapter: ‘Traversing Trinidad’s Wild West’. Stating, ‘...use of terror may have been a reaction against the psychic terror of insurrection and the threat of a second Haiti’.¹⁴ The fear was heightened by the threat of those with anti-British sentiments following the loss of the American colonies and the on-going issue of revolutionary France, with the Caribbean holding a sizable French population.¹⁵ *The*

¹⁰ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. p.vii

¹¹ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. pp. 1 - 8

¹² Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. p. 14

¹³ Benton & Ford, ‘Island Despotism’ p.31

¹⁴ Peake, *Between the Bocas*, p.52

¹⁵ Peake, *Between the Bocas*, p.50

Cambrian newspaper would come to describe the inhabitants of Trinidad as ‘pirates, fraudulent debtors, stealers of slaves, and refugee revolutionists from the French settlements’.¹⁶ *The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian* would later describe the island as ‘...that seditious and unruly colony..’.¹⁷ Both statements being made in justifications for Picton’s decision. It is also worth noting the context of political and social mood of the period in which Picton found himself governor, regarding the slave-trade and especially the specific concerns surrounding Trinidad itself. Calls for reform and abolition had been steadily growing. Not least in Picton’s home country of Wales with its large number of Non-conformist congregations who tended to back the end of human trafficking and forced labour. Non-conformists made up the majority of the founding members of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade which was created in 1787.¹⁸ Add to this, a change in government in 1801 when William Pitt’s ministry was replaced by that of Henry Addington’s. Louisiana State University’s Patrick Lipscomb’s 1969 article, ‘Party Politics, 1801-1802: George Canning and the Trinidad Question’ tells us that Pitt had been under pressure from investors to sell land in Trinidad as well as other areas of the West Indies. Selling Crown land holdings worried the abolitionists, as further white settlement and expansion could mean further slave-labour to clear and work the land, a risk Pitt had not been willing to take. The new ministry provided a fresh opportunity for potential investors, Addington however, although eager to expand the white and creole population, was not going to rush into the sale of land without a detailed survey of the island and its

¹⁶ Anon., ‘Memoirs of Lieut-Gen. Sir Thos. Picton, G.C.B.’ *The Cambrian* 31 October 1835, p.4, available at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3328615/3328619/17/Governor%20picton> Accessed 27 March 2022.

¹⁷ Anon., ‘General Sir Thomas Picton’ *The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian*, 14 November 1835, p.3, available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3631740/3631743/35/Governor%20picton> Accessed 15 April 2022.

¹⁸ Evans, *Slave Wales*, p.61

administration, therefore issuing a commission to report back with its findings.¹⁹ Although there had been rumours in London of Picton's cruelty, it is debatable to how far they had hastened the commission given the other circumstances. Lipscomb's paper would have us believe it was a purely political decision disconnected from Picton's actions and he does not even get a mention, whereas other historians argue otherwise. Chris Evans believes that Picton's methods raised concerns in London and were deemed 'unsafe'.²⁰ The slave-based plantation system in which Picton participated (growing immensely wealthy from²¹) and preferred was becoming increasingly unpopular back in Britain. Abolitionists saw Trinidad as an opportunity to trial an alternative slave-free society as the plantation system had never been fully implemented as it had been elsewhere.²² As Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford point out, 'this vision clashed with Trinidad's economic and demographic realities'.²³ Clearly Picton's methods and ideologies conflicted with those which were steadily gaining ground at home, among those opposed to such regimes was William Fullerton, the First Commissioner in Addington's investigative commission of 1802.

Fullerton's appointment effectively demoted Picton, making him Second Commissioner. This came as an affront to someone who had practically been left in charge of his own dictatorship for years. When his commander Sir Ralph Abercromby left the island shortly after its acquisition, he advised the rookie governor to 'execute Spanish law as well as you can. Do justice according to your conscience. That is all that can be expected from you'.²⁴ Having

¹⁹ Patrick Lipscomb, 'III. Party Politics, 1801–1802: George Canning and the Trinidad Question,' *The Historical Journal*, 12(3), pp. 442–466. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/core/journals/historical-journal/article/iii-party-politics-18011802-george-canning-and-the-trinidad-question/46170EDD05BC252C635B9493996B93F8> Accessed 09 April 2022

²⁰ Evans, *Slave Wales*. p. 73

²¹ Evans, *Slave Wales*. p.70 On his departure in 1803 it was estimated Picton's investments were worth between £80,000 - £100,000.

²² Evans, *Slave Wales*, p.70

²³ Benton & Ford, *Island Despotism*, p.22

²⁴ Havard, *Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. pp.8-9

been given a difficult task and doing the best in the circumstances under perceived laws, would be the line his defence took and the narrative the Welsh press would often use in his favour. A letter addressed to Picton early in his governorship from Don Christoval De Robles, a long-standing member of Trinidadian society, offered the new governor advice on his task. Following a brief statement regarding how weak the previous government had been and to how far this had led to lawlessness. He proceeds to warn him that his troops are easily influenced, that he cannot rely on his magistrates and ultimately, he had become ‘supreme political, criminal, civil and military judge...our laws enable you to judge summarily, without recusation or appeal...not shackled by forms or modes of prosecution... only answerable to God and your conscience’.²⁵ *The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian* in 1835 would explain to its readers that in his duty to obtain obedience, his undoing was due to him doing too good a job, ‘too honestly for his own safety’.²⁶ However, it is safe to say that Fullerton was not satisfied with the way the island had been governed. After many disagreements over Picton’s methods and provocation from both sides, Picton tendered his resignation in 1803, scarcely one month after Fullerton’s arrival.²⁷ Again, the bad-blood between Picton and Fullerton would still be used as leverage in support of the ‘hard done by’ attitude the Welsh press took in his favour for many years. In 1900 *The Pembroke County Guardian* would print, as part of their ‘Pembrokeshire Men of the Century’, an article reiterating that his success as governor had made him many enemies and that his subsequent trial was mostly down to ‘a good deal of personal vindictiveness’.²⁸ He returned to Britain to find himself faced with numerous charges raised by Fullerton regarding

²⁵ H.B. Robinson, *Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton: Including His Correspondence, From Originals in Possession of His Family*. Pickle Partner publishing, 2018, pp. 44-46

²⁶ Anon., ‘General Sir Thomas Picton’

²⁷ Evans, *Slave Wales*, p.73

²⁸ Henry Owen, ‘Pembrokeshire men of the century, Picton’. *The Pembrokeshire County Guardian*, 07 March 1900, p.7, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3648742/3648749/25/Calderon> accessed 04 May 2022.

his time as governor and alleged unlawful punishments. However, only the case of the torture of Luisa Calderon, a girl of mixed heritage and uncertain but young age was eventually brought up in court. Luisa was arrested on the charge of theft in 1801 and on Picton's orders, tortured by the method of 'picketing' which involved being trussed up with her foot balanced on a spike. The following court proceedings caused a scandal with proponents for each side trying to swing public support. Picton was made an example of, finding himself the subject of a pamphleting war and many a newspaper article in the English press. As Epstein states, this publicity campaign resulted in a number of libel cases.²⁹ It is worth noting that 'free press' was not a given at this time and a few years later Picton himself would remark upon the same judge who presided over his case passing a sentence of two years and a £1000 fine to a journalist for challenging the use of corporal punishment in the army.³⁰ This could possibly go some way to explain why the early Welsh newspapers never took up a hard stance against Picton or it is also as likely that their political leanings genuinely did find them in favour of him. It could also have been a sense of comradery, with anti-Welsh sentiment being used by the opposing side, such as the suggestion he could not understand the constitution of English law due to being 'bred among the goats on the mountains of Wales'.³¹ The first newspaper published in Wales was *The Cambrian* in 1804, described by historian John Davies as 'the voice of Whiggery of the businessmen of Swansea'.³² It carried the story of the trial on 1st March 1806 in which it gave a neutral, matter of fact run through of the proceedings, sympathising with the suffering of Luisa yet careful not to directly chastise Picton,³³ from thereon in however it held a very pro-Picton sentiment throughout the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, p. 18

³⁰ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*, p.127

³¹ Evans, *Slave Wales*, p. 73

³² John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London, 1994) p.358

³³ Anon, Trial of General Picton, *The Cambrian*, 01 March 1806, p.2, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3321180/3321182/2/%E2%80%98Picton,%20calderon%E2%80%99> accessed 09 May 2022.

The presence of the infamous anti-slavery orienteered barrister William Garrow on the side of the injured party shows the gravity of the case.³⁴ Fullerton's determination to bring Picton to justice went so far as to bring Luisa to London to stand as a witness and in 1806 he was found guilty of authorising the illegal use of torture. Demanding a re-trial, in 1808 his defence argued on the technicality that he was acting under the Spanish law which was still in situ on the island and did not outlaw the use of torture. On this account, no further action was taken.³⁵ The scandal raised many questions about the issues of governing such colonies and as Epstein explains it highlighted the difficulties of 'maintaining a clear separation between metropolitan and colonial codes of justice'.³⁶ Leading Evans to ask 'was constitutional normality possible in such places?'.³⁷ Benton and Ford think not, stating that the trial 'showcased the incapacity of metropolitan courts to adjudicate on the constitution of empire'.³⁸

The Cambrian was eager to show its support and relief for the verdict, with, 'a most anxious wish to place innocence and honour in the clearest light...', wary that even the most sensible person could have '...imbibed erroneous notions' following the antics of Picton's enemies. Reiterating his innocence to its readers it confirms that he acted under the law of the island then goes on to lay the blame on the '...violent and overbearing...' Fullerton.³⁹ However it states it will not dwell on the animosities between Picton and Fullerton, due to the latter's

³⁴John Hostettler, Richard Braby, and Geoffrey Robertson. *Sir William Garrow: His Life, Times and Fight for Justice*. The Picton Trials. Waterside Press 2010. pp. 107 – 116. [Online] Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/open/reader.action?docID=3416258&ppg=109> (Accessed 09 April 2022)

³⁵ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. pp. 50-92

³⁶ Epstein, *A scandal of Colonial rule*, p.26

³⁷ Evans, *Slave Wales*, p.69

³⁸ Benton & Ford, *Island Despotism*, p. 39

³⁹ Anon, Governor Picton's Trial, *The Cambrian*, 02 July 1808, p.4, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3321740/3321744/18/Calderon> accessed 08 May 2022.

recent death⁴⁰ it considers it better his name be ‘...consigned to eternal oblivion.’ for the sake of his family. It rounds off its report of the reversal of Picton’s guilty verdict by trusting its readers are now ‘...fully convinced of the justice...’ and from what he was subjected ‘...his fame will appear the brighter...’. On that last note however, it is a matter of opinion as to whether this situation continued to cast a shadow over the rest of his career. Due to *The Cambrian* being the earliest Welsh newspaper there is little to compare them to at this time but although these are the opinions of but one tabloid, the same sentiments were echoed throughout various other papers regardless of political leanings for years to come. Historians too, although unwilling to back the same claims of innocence would also to some extent agree with certain aspects. Benton and Ford agree that the evidence produced was mainly gathered from those who ‘had an axe to grind’ against Picton due to the fraught nature of Trinidad’s politics⁴¹ whilst Epstein confirms the intense personal rivalry between the two commissioners which fuelled the debates⁴². Picton must have felt a huge sense of relief, not only for his freedom and reputation but for his very life. Only a few years prior in 1802, another governor was executed in London having sat trial in the same court on charges of causing the death of a soldier without court martial, a crime Picton had also originally been accused of.⁴³

Seemingly with his troubles behind him, Picton joined Wellington’s campaign against the French in 1810. As general of the Third Division in the Iberian Peninsula, his actions prompted yet more praise and support from the Welsh press, especially after the successful siege of the Spanish town of Badajoz which ended 6th April 1812, for which he received

⁴⁰ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. pp. 89-92. Fullerton died 13 Feb 1808. His wife continued to push for the prosecution of Picton but no further action was taken.

⁴¹ Benton & Ford, *Island Despotism*, p.31

⁴² Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, p.131

⁴³ Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, p.19

thanks from the House of Lords. As printed in *The Cambrian* 2nd May 1812, The Earl of Liverpool declared that ‘The Noble conduct of Gen. Picton had, on this as well as every other occasion in which he had served, inspired the British troops by his personal bravery.’⁴⁴ The Welsh media seemed eager to print any snippet they could gather of these noble deeds with *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Daily Advertiser* printing on the same day, a gushing accolade of ‘our gallant countryman’ in which they include the recollections of a Staff Officer who proclaimed that had it not been for the ‘skill’ of the ‘extraordinary’ and ‘highly esteemed’ Picton, they would still have been outside of the town.⁴⁵ Prior to this on 18th April they had also printed ‘For the honour of Wales, and more particularly of Pembrokeshire...’ a first-hand account from a soldier of The Welsh Fusiliers in the midst of the siege hoping ‘for the honour of my country’ the success of his ‘brave and dashing’ general who is ‘the pride of his division.’⁴⁶ The same paper printed in the November of that year, the occasion of Picton’s return to Haverfordwest in which it describes the celebrations and throngs of people wishing to ‘...congratulate their gallant countryman...’.⁴⁷ His return visit obviously caused quite a stir in his home county, with cannons, church bells and banners displaying his most recent military honours. Picton’s visit however was not just a cordial jaunt home but also a means to canvass votes for his budding career in politics as M.P. for the Boroughs of Pembroke, triumph would be guaranteed judging by the reception he received

⁴⁴ Anon, Imperial Parliament, House of Lords, *The Cambrian*, 05 May 1812, p.2, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3322725/3322727/7/%E2%80%98Picton%20rodrigo%20%E2%80%99%E2%80%99> accessed 18 April 2022.

⁴⁵ Anon, Review of Politics, *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Daily Advertiser*, 05 May 1812 p.3, Available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3676884/3676887/12/%E2%80%98Picton%20badajoz%E2%80%99%E2%80%99> accessed 09 May 2022.

⁴⁶ Anon, To the Editor, *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Daily Advertiser*, 18 April 1812, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3676874/3676877/13/%E2%80%98Picton%20coa%E2%80%99> accessed 09 Mat 2022

⁴⁷ Anon, Review of Politics (B) *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Daily Advertiser*, 21 November 1812, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3677019/3677022/11/%E2%80%98Picton%20rodrigo%20%E2%80%99%E2%80%99> accessed 19 May 2022.

recounted *The Journal*. Picton was evidently looking to put down roots in his now mid-fifties as that same year he also purchased the dilapidated manor house of Iscoed in Carmarthen, for the huge sum of £30,000⁴⁸ which he intended to renovate, paid for says Evans, with his ill-gotten gains from his plantation days.⁴⁹ Clearly Picton had much recovered from his court appearance. The Welsh press seemed eager to continue the ‘hero’ agenda, also it seems were the government as he was finally knighted in 1813 whilst around the same time he succeeding in becoming the Member of Parliament for Pembroke. However, a peerage which had been awarded to many of his comrades still alluded him and the popular rationale amongst the press was that this was due, unfairly, to his rough countenance, his temperament perhaps not fitting as well as others according to the *North Wales Chronicle*.⁵⁰ What is conspicuous by its absence at this time is any mention of Trinidad and the fact that only due to a questionable technicality was he now riding high on the wave of military, personal and political success. It was certainly not mentioned when on 18th June 1815 Picton took a bullet to the temple leading a charge at the battle of Waterloo. Many a Welsh newspaper printed outpourings of grief, the word ‘lamented’ being the most favoured to describe the deceased. Amongst the devotions the *North Wales Gazette* printed a short piece on the discovery of a serious wound which Picton had obtained two days before the battle, concealing what could well have been a fatal injury if he had not otherwise died, the Gazette concluded that this was an act of devotion to his country to the expense of his own life.⁵¹ As Evans words it, ‘the war hero was revered, the “blood soaked governor” of a Caribbean slave island forgotten’.⁵² It

⁴⁸ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*, p.200

⁴⁹ Evans, *Slave Wales*, P.70

⁵⁰ Anon, The Memoirs of Lieut. Gen. Picton G.C.B. *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 November 1835, p.4, Available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4460235/4460239/44/%E2%80%98Picton,%20memoirs%E2%80%99> accessed 07 May 2022.

⁵¹ Anon, *North Wales Gazette*, 03 August 1815, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3873000/3873003/11/Picton,%20Waterloo> accessed 18 April 2022.

⁵² Evans, *Slave Wales*, p.78

was not long after his death that the prospect of permanent memorials and dedications began to be discussed, committees formed and public funding called for.

Chapter 2: Monuments and memorials

Only a few months after his demise, a committee in Carmarthen published the minutes of their meeting on 9th August 1815 in regards to efforts to secure a permanent memorial.⁵³ However, a monument was not forthcoming. As the article in *North Wales Gazette* dated 17th June 1824 shows, there was still no monument, nor was there any certainty of the type or location. It makes reference to the fact that there had been such a lull in proceeding and that for a time, the prospect of any monument had been uncertain due to issues including ‘a great insufficiency of means’.⁵⁴ The consensus was however that decisions and funding should predominantly lie with the local area to which the monument should be placed. It was eventually decided that the monument should be erected in Carmarthen itself, however the first stone was not laid until 1825, an event on which *The Cambrian* reported along with a speech made by the M.P. for Glamorganshire, Sir Christopher Cole. Cole, unsurprisingly sings the praises of Picton’s military exploits for which the monument is to be raised, yet also, more surprisingly, drags up the issue of Trinidad, if only to defend his character against the ‘violent persecution ... of this honest and upright public servant’.⁵⁵ Contrary to Evans’s opinion, it was the ‘blood-soaked’ but not the ‘governor’ which was forgotten by the Welsh media at this point in time. It would appear however that the original monument would be as short lived as Picton’s negative reputation, owing to the poor quality of building material the Roman cement from which it was made soon began to crumble.⁵⁶ A fact which did not go

⁵³ Anon, *The Cambrian*, 09 August 1815, p.3, available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3323575/3323578/9/Picton,%20Waterloo> accessed 12 May 2022.

⁵⁴ Anon, Monument or Cairn, *North Wales Gazette*, 17 June 1824, p.2, available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3873660/3873662/8/%E2%80%98Picton%20monument%E2%80%99> access 03 May 2022.

⁵⁵ Anon, Sir Thomas Picton’s Monument, *The Cambrian*, 27 August 1825, p.4, available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3326005/3326009/19/%E2%80%98Picton%20monument%E2%80%99> accessed 04 May 2022

⁵⁶ Coflein, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The Picton Monument [Online] Available at: <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/32669?term=picton> (Accessed 28 February 2022)

unnoticed by a soldier who made his views clear in an angry letter addressed to the editor of *The Welshman* newspaper in January of 1844. On the one hand he is furious that the monument has been left to ruin while on the other he is insulted that this has been reported by a South Wales correspondent for *The Times London* newspaper to the embarrassment of Carmarthen and the detriment to Picton's memory. The article he refers to was printed the previous year in both *The Times* and reprinted in various Welsh papers. Entitled 'A contrast – Brecon - Carmarthen' in which after a positive spin on the town of Brecon it launches into a scathing and somewhat racist attack on Carmarthen. Firstly it confirms this to be the home town of Picton and leaves no doubt that they believe him a true British hero before claiming that his memorial is an '...unsightly piece of Welsh taste...' and in short, the people of Carmarthen do not want or care to spend money on the 'shabby' memorial, their 'peddling barbarism' and lack of civility owing to their very Welshness. It suggests the Picton family should fund its upkeep, a proposal which disgusts the soldier who believes the people of Carmarthen should be, and want to be, responsible.⁵⁷ These articles certainly seem to have led to a push to replace the dilapidated memorial. By the time *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* printed a few lines in 1846, likening it to a lime kiln and stating 'the Monument truly is like a man's character- it is easier to pull it to pieces than to set it right again,'⁵⁸ the wheels were already in motion for a much needed upgrade for which public subscription were again called for. The new monument, 'worthy of the country which gave him birth,' was erected in 1847, not before another soldier, a Captain Gwynne, had written to the committee 'begging' to know if the council would this time take responsibility for its upkeep.⁵⁹ Battles

⁵⁷ Anon, The Picton Monument (Carmarthen) *The Welshman*, 05 January 1844, p.1, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4345989/4345990/6/%E2%80%98Picton%20monument%E2%80%99> accessed 18 April 2022.

⁵⁸ Anon, *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 03 October 1846, p.2, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3088796/3088798/18/%E2%80%98Picton,%20monument%E2%80%99> accessed 05 May 2022.

⁵⁹ Anon, Carmarthen Town Council, *The Welshman*, 17 July 1846, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4364775/4364778/17/%E2%80%98Picton,%20monument%E2%80%99> accessed 01 May 2022.

for maintenance, the input of old soldiers and decisions being left to the people and local authorities of Carmarthen would be a running theme throughout the history of this particular stone pillar, the mortal remains of the man it commemorated however, were about to become the responsibility of the state.

In 1859 after forty four years of lying in the family vault in Hanover Square it was decided that a more fitting place of rest would be in St. Paul's Cathedral.⁶⁰ South Wales's *Potter's Electric News* ran the story stating that with the approval of Queen Victoria he would be transferred to '...our depository of national heroes...' before giving the timings of the event.⁶¹ After the apparent solemn and well attended funeral a number of Welsh papers gave a run through of the proceedings. *The Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser* advised its readers that the 'illustrious general' was laid to rest with military honours close to the tomb of the Duke of Wellington who had died a few years prior.⁶² And thus Thomas Picton became, and still is, the only Welshman to be buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, commemorated with a life-size marble bust surrounded by figures and a lion. The elaborate memorial preceded the arrival of Picton's remains by a number of years and cost the public purse £3150.⁶³ In 1907 another life-size image, a portrait, came onto the market creating a certain degree of excitement over the possibility it could be procured for an institution such as The Welsh National Museum. *The Weekly Mail* ran the story, suggesting a wealthy benefactor

⁶⁰ Havard, *A Life of Sir Thomas Picton*. p. 252

⁶¹ Anon, Local Intelligence, *Potter's Electric News*, 08 June 1859, p.2, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3100056/3100058/3/%E2%80%98Picton,%20Cathedral%E2%80%99> accessed 04 April 2022.

⁶² Anon, The Removal of the Remains of Sir Thomas Picton, *The Pembrokeshire Herald*, 10 June 1859, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3055286/3055289/20/%E2%80%98Picton,%20Cathedral%E2%80%99> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁶³ Imperial War Museum, War Memorials register, 2022, available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/11736> accessed 04 May 2022 and U.K. Parliamentary Papers, Return of monuments erected in Westminster abbey and St. Paul's, at public expense, 1750-1837, 1838, Available at: <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/parlipapers/search/basic/hcppbasicsearch?accountid=14697> accessed 18 April 2022.

would be doing a great service should they purchase for Wales, the painting of ‘...probably the greatest Cymric warrior since Prince Llewelyn’.⁶⁴ The painting was in fact purchased that year by the Earl of Plymouth and gifted to the museum as was wished.⁶⁵ The painting also prompted a lengthier article in *The Nationalist: A Non-political Magazine for Wales*, again hoping it could be purchased for the nation but also publishing a mini biography of the man himself, this time alluding that he be the ‘...finest soldier Wales has produced since the days of Owen Glendower’.⁶⁶ As well as the usual glowing praise for his military achievements, the article also shows that the idea of his trial being a mere vindictive attempt by his ‘unscrupulous enemies’ to undermine him, rather than to bring justice for the abused, was still alive at this time which marked one hundred years since Britain had outlawed the international slave trade. It is interesting to note the aforementioned references and comparisons to such legendary Welsh warriors of old, a sentiment the general public may not have held by this time judging by the response to the opportunity for a new Picton statue.

In 1916, Welsh statesman and future prime minister, David Lloyd George unveiled eleven new statues in the City Hall in Cardiff. As Angela Gaffney explains in her 1998 article “‘A National Valhalla for Wales’: D.A. Thomas and the Welsh Historical sculpture scheme, 1910-1916’, the eleven statues were to represent Wales’s most notable historic figures and were chosen, in part, by a public vote. However, after Cardiff’s *Western Mail* newspaper offered the chance of a £20 prize for nominations, they only received 364 entries, revealing

⁶⁴ Anon, General Picton, portrait of a celebrated Welsh warrior, *Weekly Mail*, 30 March 1907, p.8, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3443777/3443785/179/%E2%80%98Shee%20picton%20portrait%E2%80%99> accessed 17 May 2022.

⁶⁵ National Museum Wales, Artist: SHEE, Sir Martin Archer (1769-1850) 2022, available at: https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/4adfd41-6370-36bf-a907-c74f5ad7d4a5/Lieutenant-General-Sir-Thomas-Picton-1758-1815/?field0=string&value0=PICTON&field1=with_images&value1=1&index=3 accessed 23 May 2022.

⁶⁶ Anon, Sir Thomas Picton. *The Nationalist – a non-political magazine for Wales*. The nationalist | Vol. I no. 2 - April 1907, pp.10-13 | 1907 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales. Available at: <https://journals.library.wales/view/2407833/2407870/12#?xywh=-431%2C-133%2C3661%2C4397> (Accessed 28 February 2022)

‘...a conspicuous lack of interest in Welsh historic heroes’.⁶⁷ Picton was nominated for valour and generalship but received one of the lowest amounts of votes at only 49.⁶⁸ He was still chosen over more popular figures by the deciding panel however which received complaints to the press, asking what achievements he had gained for Wales? *The Cambria Daily Leader* received a letter pointing out that Picton was barely Welsh, stating ‘...he contributed nothing to Welsh nationalism other than his having been born in Pembrokeshire’. A sentiment the paper thoroughly rejected.⁶⁹ Previous to the decision to erect the statues there had been suggestions that a sanatorium would be a more beneficial use of money.⁷⁰ A notion which likely gained more support on the outbreak of war when the cost of statues must have seemed rather frivolous in the midst of such carnage and economic pressures. Perhaps the low poll count for Picton’s statue suggests interest in the long dead general was starting to wane, perhaps in truth it had not really been there to start with or people just felt some sense of duty to commemorate such a local ‘hero’, hence the initial enthusiasm and then lack of support and upkeep of the Carmarthen monument. In 1914 the *Haverfordwest and Milford Haven Telegraph* reported that an appeal for another memorial had failed due to lack of interest⁷¹ though he was remembered in 1915 for the Waterloo centenary with wreath laying at the monument and below his portrait in Carmarthen guildhall.⁷² No further monuments

⁶⁷ Angela Gaffney, ‘A National Valhalla for Wales’ D.A. Thomas and the Welsh Historical Sculpture Scheme , 1910-1916 . *Transactions of the Honourable society of Cymmrodorion*. Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales. 1998, p.131-144, Available at: [Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion | 1998 pp.131-144, \(New Series, Vol. 5, 1999\) | 1998 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales](https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4425445/4425449/54/PICTON%20STATUE) (Accessed 28 February 2022)

⁶⁸ Gaffney, A National Valhalla, p.135

⁶⁹ Anon, Ten Famous Welshmen, *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 31 July 1913, p.3. available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4425445/4425449/54/PICTON%20STATUE> accessed 04 May 2022.

⁷⁰ Gaffney, A National Valhalla, p.132.

⁷¹ Anon, General Picton Memorial, *Haverfordwest and Milford Haven Telegraph*, 21 January 1914, p.3, available at:

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4118172/4118175/17/%E2%80%98Picton%20monument%E2%80%99> accessed 16 May 2022.

⁷² Anon, General Picton, *Herald of Wales and Monmouthshire Recorder*, 26 June 1915, p.3, available at: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4114690/4114693/34/%E2%80%98Statue,%20picton,%20Cardiff%E2%80%99> accessed 09 May 2022.

were erected outside of the nineteenth century⁷³ and the Picton commemoration scene remained pretty quiet other than the partial re-building on the monument in 1988. A preceding 1984 article in *The Guardian* reported that due to budget cuts it may have to be reduced in size, being unable to afford repairs to the dangerous structure. Again, it was those of a military background who shouted the loudest for its protection although they were pessimistic regarding the outcome. Field Marshal Carver commented on the monument's sad demise but thought that it would raise little public enthusiasm with most people unaware of who Picton was. The article makes no reference to Trinidad or anything other than Waterloo.⁷⁴ Clearly the funds were found and the monument repaired, which is apparently still in 'excellent condition' at the present time.⁷⁵ As evidenced, the interest in commemorating Picton came in fits and starts, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was a case of either trying to garner enthusiasm for a new memorial or for the upkeep of those in existence. Lack of funds and interest in the subject seems to be the root cause when appeals fell short, rather than any animosity against his past endeavours. Which begs the question, were people even aware of the Trinidad scandal at this time? Even in 1835 *The Cambrian* suggested its younger readers were unlikely to have heard of the case.⁷⁶ Fast forward to 2020 however, when the murder of black American George Floyd sparked protests and movements all over the world, including the call for reinterpretations of memorials to people who had been involved in the slave trade. Picton was suddenly in the press again, only this time it was not for his actions as Wales's 'hero'.

⁷³ Task and Finish Group, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire An Audit of Commemoration in Wales, Report and Audit*. 2021. P.13. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-12/the-slave-trade-and-the-british-empire-an-audit-of-commemoration-in-wales.pdf> Accessed 01 May 2022

⁷⁴ Paul Hoyland 'Cuts face a town's hero with his Waterloo', *The Guardian*, 17 October 1984, p.6. Available at: <https://www-proquest-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/docview/186498781?pq-origsite=primo> (Accessed 09 April 2022)

⁷⁵ Task and Finish Group, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire*, p.81.

⁷⁶ Anon., 'Memoirs of Lieut-Gen. Sir Thos. Picton, G.C.B.' *The Cambrian* 31 October 1835, p.4, available at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3328615/3328619/17/Governor%20picton> Accessed 27 March 2022.

Chapter 3: Modern-day controversy

Following a government backed audit of commemoration in Wales in November 2020 it was found that Picton was by far the most commemorated person in the country who had taken part in or who had directly benefited from the slave trade. In total, 4 monuments, 5 buildings and 30 streets were named in his honour.⁷⁷ So it should come as no surprise, following the recent campaigns of groups such as ‘Black Lives Matter’ and the coverage of statues to other controversial public figures being defaced or toppled, that the legacy of such a man as Picton who not only owned and profited from slaves but who also escaped justice for acts of cruelty should be called into question. The audit, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales*, which states that Picton had been the most prominent Welsh person in recent campaigns and debates relating to monuments⁷⁸ was followed in March 2021 by Welsh Parliament’s *Set in Stone? A report on who gets remembered in public spaces* which incorporates a number of opinions from the Welsh general public, historians and members of organisations.⁷⁹ Hadassah Radway, a Jamaican born member of Race Council Cymru thinks it ‘abhorrent’ to still have memorials to slave owners and that having them as reminders will have an impact on the mental health and well-being of black people ‘because these remind us that there was a time in history when we were treated as cattle, when we treated as shackles, when we were treated as property’.⁸⁰ Compare this to the opposite view received by Counsellor Campbell who advised people had written to contest the need to look at Picton as anything other than a military hero. With echoes of the disgruntled soldier from 1844, some people who had served in the armed forces had pointed out that ‘...any slur on

⁷⁷ Task and Finish Group, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire*, p.9.

⁷⁸ Task and Finish Group, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire*, p.14

⁷⁹ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee (2021) *Set in Stone? A report on who gets remembered in public spaces*. Available at: <https://senedd.wales/media/3jbnhs2d/cr-ld14301-e.pdf> (Accessed 09 May 2022)

⁸⁰ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* p.10-11

Picton was a slur on their calling as veterans and so on and so forth'.⁸¹ A sentiment Campbell sympathises with but disagrees, stating that it would be 'unfair and unethical' to forget the violence and cruelty. Then there are those of the opinion that monuments should stay but should have better information about past deeds, such as one anonymous participant who believes that statues are educational and show how far Wales has come as a country and act as a warning to not repeat history, stating 'the minute you start just deciding to tear that away, you are not giving other children and young people in society a proper education about history'.⁸²

To remove or keep reminders of those with dubious pasts is clearly a contentious issue. An article in *The Economist* entitled 'Cancel Culture; Iconoclasm Past and Present', likens the toppling of statues to the iconoclasm of the reformation, in method at least. Stating 'Britain is in the midst of an image controversy', and warns that history has taught us that those who want to keep images around for educational purposes are usually on the losing end of the battle.⁸³ Will there however, be regrets about losing historical monuments which have become part of the landscape and hold meanings other than what they originally represented? Think of the carefully restored murals released from many layer of whitewash in pre-reformation churches, now admired as valuable works of art and historical sources. As one submission to the commemoration audit pointed out, the decision to erect a monument is in itself an historical event, erasing the monument is also erasing the event from memory.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* p.24

⁸² Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* pp.31-32

⁸³ Anon, Cancel culture; Iconoclasm past and present, *The Economist* (2022) from Gale Academic Onefile Available at: <https://go-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=tou&id=GALE|A688817955&v=2.1&it=r> (Accessed 14 April 2022)

⁸⁴ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* p.14

Monuments such as the Picton memorial in Carmarthen become part of the town itself, a landmark, a focal point, a meeting place, something so familiar and ingrained into a local area it may seem unimaginable to inhabitants to simply remove it. As such, the decision was made to keep the monument as and where it is, with the view to add information boards reflecting Picton's past. This in itself poses questions. Dr Simon John of Swansea University asks 'do you say that Picton was a heroic warrior first or do you say he was a slaver trader first?'⁸⁵ However, a spokesperson for the diversity and equality promoting organisation, Race Council Cymru, welcomed the measure, saying it will offer people a greater understanding of 'a controversial and complex man'.⁸⁶ *The National*, a Welsh daily news website reported in December 2021 that of almost 2500 respondents to an official poll on the future of the memorial, 1613 wanted no changes making whereas 744 wanted adjustments.⁸⁷ What was conclusive was that the decisions, as when it was first erected, would be left to the local community and authority.⁸⁸ As for the other Picton memorials the debates are still ongoing. The Cardiff City Hall statue is currently still in situ, albeit wrapped in a wooden box awaiting further decisions, a move which saw the BBC's famous Welsh presenter Huw Edwards come under fire for his opposition to the outcome. *WalesOnline* reported that Edwards sparked a 'twitter row' having felt uneasy at the statue's removal and the resulting 'censoring of history'.⁸⁹ Although as also reported in *WalesOnline* in August 2021, Cardiff Council had voted for its removal yet have been delayed by the pandemic and red tape regarding consent

⁸⁵ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* p.25

⁸⁶ Harries & Lewis., 'Monument to 'war hero' linked to slave trade to stay put in Carmarthen after public vote'

⁸⁷ Richard Youle, Carmarthen Thomas Picton memorial to be updated, *The National for all of Wales*. 22 December 2021 Available at: <https://www.thenational.wales/news/19803052.carmarthen-thomas-picton-memorial-updated/> Accessed 28 February 2022)

⁸⁸ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?*

⁸⁹ Cathy Owen, Huw Edwards sparks Twitter row after saying he feels 'uneasy' about Sir Thomas Picton portrait removal, *WalesOnline*, 05 November 2021, Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/huw-edwards-picton-portrait-twitter-22057196> accessed 12 May 2022.

and conservation of the statue and in regards to the listed building in which it stands.⁹⁰ The portrait in National Museum Wales is also now in storage, to be replaced by art commissioned to represent black experience as part of the museum's 'reframing Picton' project. Picton's image may be redisplayed and reinterpreted in future.⁹¹ In addition to physical monuments, attention has been paid to ensure Picton's misdemeanours are not overlooked in other areas. Take for example his entry in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* which up until 2020 held no mention of anything untoward other than the vague mention that his time as governor 'occasioned violent controversy', now updated to include the accusations and court case.⁹² Although 2020 was the year which highlighted that changes had to be made when it came to such public monuments it was not the first time they had been challenged. In 2011 there were calls for his portrait which ironically hung behind the judge's chair in Carmarthen Crown Court to be removed.⁹³ Although the audit states the portrait was removed to Scolton Manor Museum⁹⁴, a short investigation reveals that one of Scolton Museum's venues is in fact the guildhall which functions as the court.⁹⁵ So it would appear this particular portrait is still in situ and seems to have so far evaded the scrutiny attracted by the other memorials. The marble bust in St. Paul's Cathedral is also under consideration as part of the project 'Pantheons: Sculpture at St Paul's Cathedral'⁹⁶, so for the time being the future of some of Picton memorials are yet to be decided. Clearly these monuments are a

⁹⁰ Alex Seabrook, Statue of slave owner Thomas Picton still in Cardiff City Hall a year after removal vote, *WalesOnline*, 06 August 2021, available at : <https://walesnewsonline.com/statue-of-slave-owner-thomas-picton-still-in-cardiff-city-hall-a-year-after-removal-vote/> accessed 20 April 2022

⁹¹ National Museum Wales, Reframing Picton, 2022, available at: <https://museum.wales/about-us/Black-lives-matter/reframing-picton/#:~:text=Reframing%20Picton%20About%20the%20project%20Amgueddfa%20Cymru%20and,narrative%20around%20the%20portrait%20of%20Lieutenant-General%20Thomas%20Picton.> accessed 11 May 2022.

⁹² Dictionary of Welsh Biography, Thomas Picton, 2022, available at: <https://biography.wales/article/s-PICT-THO-1758> accessed 01 May 2022.

⁹³ Geoffrey Bindman. Wellington's brutal general, *New law journal*, 2014-10-03, Vol.164 (7624), p.22 [Online] Available at: [Lexis@Library: Document \(open.ac.uk\)](https://www.lexislibrary.com/document/open.ac.uk) (Accessed 28 February 2022)

⁹⁴ Task and Finish Group, *The Slave Trade and the British Empire*, p.81

⁹⁵ Art UK, Carmarthen Guildhall, 2022, available at: <https://artuk.org/visit/region/south-west-wales> accessed 25 May 2022.

⁹⁶ St, Paul's Cathedral, *Pantheons: Sculpture at St Paul's Cathedral*, c.1796-1916, 2022 available at: [Pantheons: Sculpture at St Paul's Cathedral \(c.1796-1916\) \(york.ac.uk\)](https://www.york.ac.uk/pantheons-sculpture-at-st-pauls-cathedral-c-1796-1916/) accessed 23 May 2022.

highly contentious issue which is still ongoing and as such opinions are very much down to the individual. Their future remains to be seen but if nothing else they have served to highlight an incident many were unaware of and as an opportunity to educate about the crimes of Britain's imperial past. As quoted from historian Professor Merfyn Jones, Picton's case is a perfect example of when 'today's heroes become tomorrow's villains.'⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Welsh Parliament, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, *Set in Stone?* p.11

Conclusion

Considering the trial in 1806 had caused such a scandal in the English papers, there is little evidence of any negativity against Picton in the Welsh press until relatively recently. It would be conjecture to give a certain reason for this but possible explanations include the fear of libel, political leanings or a sense of loyalty to a fellow Welshman. The latter perhaps fuelled by anti-Welsh sentiment from the opposing side. It is clear from the evidence that the consensus from the Welsh press, for the nineteenth century at least, was that Picton had been made a scapegoat through no fault of his own. A man in the wrong place at the wrong time whose enemies had unfairly tried to ruin him. Also, little is made in the press of his more heinous crimes, a lesser crime in comparison being widely reported and remembered which may have influenced public perception. The press at this time would certainly want us to believe the 'hero' status, both for his military exploits and for what they perceived as his success as governor. Whilst it is hard to excuse his actions, it is easier to see why some at the time would believe him inculpable based on the circumstances of both his appointment as governor and the situation in Trinidad. In other words, thrown in at the deep end with questionable guidance during a time of heightened fear and risk to life. Couple this with the seemingly common perception that he had made many enemies and this was the reason for the supposed inflated accusations rather than any true wrong-doing. It does seem that although the atrocities carried out under his rule are by our standards inexcusable, Picton's defence of having to keep an island possibly on the verge of anarchy under control, with little experience or council was plausible. As were the reasons he came to trial when many who committed similar atrocities did not, that peers with personal grudges beyond those simply against cruelty, made sure he was ousted and reprimanded. Earlier secondary sources on the matter were few and far between, mostly only looking at his military exploits or short

biographical articles which lacked any academic quality. The last few decades however have produced more interesting and intellectual responses to how Picton's rule in Trinidad tied in with the mechanism of British law and the issues of ruling a colony in the time of slavery.

As for the later memorials and monuments, it would appear that initial enthusiasm often tailed off, perhaps what started as a moral obligation by some to remember a local 'hero' was not always reciprocated by the wider public (despite the best efforts from the press) resulting in lack of funding and the neglect of the Carmarthen monument in particular. A lack of interest rather than objection to his past misdemeanours being the reason. The 'hero' status is still pushed at this time though perhaps he was more of a forgotten hero. As the years went on and he faded from memory, interest waxed and waned as evidenced by the unenthusiastic response to the Cardiff City Hall Statue in 1916. More recent events however have sparked a renewed interest in the man and his memorials. Sources have shown patterns forming in public responses. As in the past there are still those willing to ignore his crimes in favour of military achievements, though to a lesser extent, with those of a military background more likely to take this stance. There is still a consensus that the local authority and population should have final say on the future of the memorials with some feeling more should be made of his darker history in the form of accompanying information. As for the question of whether a person can be both hero and villain at the same time for crimes and purported good deeds? Picton only seems to have been a villain briefly and only to some during the time of his trial. The 'hero' status was then fervently encouraged by the Welsh press for much of history. Even now there are those who will argue either way or for both, it is a topic very much down to the individual and it is hoped that this paper will go some way to add to the knowledge and discussions on this particular debate.

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