

A329 Dissertation.

A 'brilliantly exploited' tourist asset? To what extent did the French landing at Fishguard in 1797 act as an attraction to early tourists in Wales?

Gina Hewlett

2024

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## Introduction.

In 1797, approximately 1400 French soldiers were landed at Carregwastad point near Fishguard on the Pembrokeshire coast, surrendering two days later to a collection of local volunteer forces<sup>1</sup>. This event was noted across Britain and was reported in London newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Observer*<sup>2</sup>. At the time of its occurrence it 'caused a considerable stir',<sup>3</sup> but its importance has since been downplayed, perhaps due in part to the emergence of folkloric stories which emphasised the more farcical elements of the episode. Historians, such as Quinault and Davies, have noted that the event inspired tourism<sup>4</sup> - visitors to Fishguard went to see key sites associated with the landing and speak to those who had witnessed it.

This dissertation will investigate the extent to which the story of this event constituted a tourist attraction and acted as a 'tourist asset'<sup>5</sup> for Fishguard. In order to answer this overarching question the dissertation will be divided into two subsidiary areas of investigation, which will examine firstly, what attracted visitors to Wales as a whole in the years surrounding the Fishguard episode, and secondly, whether tourism had any discernible impact on the town of Fishguard in the period following the event.

The topic of the French landing at Fishguard has recently been addressed by several historians who emphasise its historical significance. Quinault, writing for the bicentenary of the event in 1997, examines its impact across Britain. He assesses the 'contemporary and retrospective' significance of the event, criticising the historiography which 'belittle[s] its

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<sup>1</sup> John Davies, Nigel Jenkins, Menna Baines, et al. 'The Last Invasion of Britain', *The Welsh Academy Encyclopedia of Wales*, Available at <https://search.credoreference.com/articles/Qm9va0FydGlibGU6MTExNDI1NA==?aid=275203> Accessed 12 April 2024.

<sup>2</sup> 'News', *The Times*, 27 February 1797, p.2. Available at <https://link-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/apps/doc/Z2001485188/GDCS?u=tou&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=7170ca0a>, Accessed 13 April 2024; 'News', *The Observer*, 26 February 1797, p.2. Available at <https://link-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/apps/doc/Z2001395620/GDCS?u=tou&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=eeb5ffbc>, Accessed 13 April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire in 1797: A Bicentennial Assessment', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 19. Iss. 4. (1999), p.618.

<sup>4</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire', p.637 & 641; Hywel Davies, 'Terror, Treason and Tourism: The French in Pembrokeshire in 1797', in *Footsteps of 'Liberty and Revolt': Essays on Wales and the French Revolution*, ed. By Mary-Ann Constantine & Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff, 2013), p.250 & 263.

<sup>5</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire', p.641.

importance'.<sup>6</sup> He also briefly suggests a link with tourism,<sup>7</sup> an aspect which is expanded by Davies, who observes that the French landing at Fishguard was 'packaged for consumption from the start',<sup>8</sup> examining the various ways that both tourists and locals interacted with the story of this event. In addition to more fully exploring the connections with tourism, Davies situates the 1797 landing within the contexts of the French revolution and conflict in Ireland - indicating its relevance in a wider British history. He also refers to Rose's article,<sup>9</sup> whose investigation into the origins of three of the more folkloric stories reveals elements of truth in each. Rose notes that these stories capture the imagination so that 'no popular account of the invasion is complete without them'<sup>10</sup> - this shows the importance of these stories in the general understanding of the event and therefore the visitor experience of the sites. Although elements of this dissertation are found in each of these historians' work - for example, the impact of the stories and the various connections to tourism - none focus solely on a connection between the fame of this event and tourism in Fishguard. Therefore I believe that this question will offer a different perspective, helping to shed light on the event's impact on the local area around Fishguard and thus will be a valuable addition to the historiography both of the French invasion and of early tourism in Wales.

The history of tourism in Wales is a neglected area of study. It is little mentioned in the more general histories of Wales.<sup>11</sup> Borsay has suggested that there is an impression that the tourist industry and seaside resorts are an English imposition and are not authentically Welsh;<sup>12</sup> for this reason resorts are under researched in comparison with more industrial areas. In addition, Jones, Tully and Williams argue that travel writing pertaining to Wales has often been subsumed by studies of tourism in England or Britain more generally, so that 'travel writing on Wales remains an untapped resource'.<sup>13</sup> They further note that the

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<sup>6</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire', p. 619 & 618.

<sup>7</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire', p.639 & 641.

<sup>8</sup> Davies, 'Terror, Treason and Tourism', p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Rose, 'The French at Fishguard: Fact, Fiction and Folklore', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series, Vol.9. (2003), pp. 88-101.

<sup>10</sup> Rose, 'The French at Fishguard', p.89.

<sup>11</sup> For example Geraint H Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, (Cambridge, 2007); John Graham Jones, *The History of Wales* (Cardiff, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Borsay, 'Welsh Seaside Resorts: Historiography, Sources and Themes', *Welsh History Review*, Vol.24. Iss.2 (2008), p. 102 & 104.

<sup>13</sup> Kathryn N. Jones, Carol Tully & Heather Williams, 'Travel writing and Wales', *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol.18. Iss.2. (2014), p.102.

popularity of travel writing as a genre, and a newfound interest in Welsh history and culture 'inspired new waves of travel to Wales'<sup>14</sup> at the end of the eighteenth century - meaning that there would already have been a great deal of interest in Wales around the time of the French landing.

The work of several historians<sup>15</sup> reflects Urry and Larsen's concept of the 'tourist gaze'.<sup>16</sup> This argues that tourists travel with predetermined ideas that are not always consistent with reality, and which affect the way they view their destination. In eighteenth and nineteenth century Wales, these ideas were derived from art prints and travel books. In particular, Andrews notes that poetic associations were used by tourists to enhance their experience of the landscape and introduce emotion to the scene before them.<sup>17</sup> Stories thus played an important part in the visitor experience - places could be made more interesting to tourists by association with a story, whether historical, poetical or legendary.

Scholarship concerning tourism and travel writing in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain highlights the picturesque movement as a 'conspicuous trend' responsible for drawing visitors to Wales.<sup>18</sup> Popularised by Gilpin's influential *Observations on the River Wye*,<sup>19</sup> this movement led tourists to value scenery that conformed to the rules of landscape painting. Hayman's exploration of waterfalls as tourist attractions thus correlates their rise and fall in popularity among tourists with that of the picturesque movement.<sup>20</sup> This focus on the picturesque has led to a neglect of other types of attractions featured in contemporary guide books and travel writing, such as Wales' history, culture and 'feats of engineering', which also appealed to visitors.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

<sup>15</sup> For instance Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, (Stanford, 1989) p. 35 & 67; Rita Singer, "'The Devil may take Snowdon", or: inscribing touristic disappointment in Victorian visitors' books', *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol.25. Iss.3. (2021), pp. 336-7; Hywel M Davies, 'Wales in English Travel Writing 1791-8: The Welsh Critique of Theophilus Jones', *Welsh History Review*, Vol.23. Iss.3. (2007), p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> John Urry & Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, (London, 2011), p.4 & 16.

<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth A. Bohls & Ian Duncan, *Travel Writing 1700-1830: An Anthology*, (Oxford, 2005), p.96; James Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)', *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme & Tim Youngs (Cambridge, 2002), p.46.

<sup>19</sup> Bohls & Duncan, *Travel Writing*, p.137.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Hayman, "'All Impetuous Rage": The Cult of Waterfalls in Eighteenth-century Wales', *Landscapes*, Vol.15. Iss.1. (2014) pp.23-42.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

Chapter one will look into what attracted tourists to Wales - an analysis of contemporary guide books and travel literature will be used to identify the different types of sites and attractions that visitors to Wales were keen to see in the years surrounding the event at Fishguard. This will help us to understand the importance of stories like those associated with the Fishguard episode relative to other attractions in Wales, such as the aesthetic and emotional appeal of picturesque and sublime scenery, the culture and long history of Wales, scientific interests such as botany and geology, and feats of engineering and industry. By determining how far eighteenth and nineteenth century tourists were interested in and attracted to particular places by stories, this part of the dissertation will establish that the story of the French landing at Fishguard could have acted as an attraction to tourists at this time.

Chapter two will look into the town of Fishguard and examine whether local people took advantage of the opportunity provided by their newfound notoriety to participate in the tourist industry. The investigation will be threefold - it will first examine how popular the sites associated with the French landing were to tourists; next it will consider the ways that Fishguard changed in the years following the event, and establish whether this was in response to tourist interest or other factors; it will finish by looking at the different ways that people in Fishguard catered to tourists. This examination of the specific context of Fishguard will determine the extent to which local people were able to benefit from the attractive properties of the French invasion.

In examining whether the French landing at Fishguard in 1797 acted as an attraction for tourists, this dissertation will attempt to contribute to some of the under researched areas of historiography addressed above. It will hopefully make a useful addition to the historiographies, both of the event at Fishguard and of early tourism in Wales, by concluding that although the story of the French landing was of interest to tourists at this time, the impact on Fishguard was minimal, so it cannot be said that it was 'brilliantly exploited as a tourist asset'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire', p.641.

## Chapter One.

What attracted tourists to Wales in the years surrounding the French landing at Fishguard, 1770-1830?

This chapter will explore what attracted visitors to Wales in the years surrounding the French landing at Fishguard, approximately between 1770 and 1830, in order to determine whether the stories and physical sites of this event could be considered an attraction to tourists. At this time, the disruption to the Grand Tour occasioned by war in Europe<sup>23</sup> led those who would ordinarily have travelled abroad to perform instead a home tour. The wilder locations in Britain such as the Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, and the mountains of north Wales thus increased in popularity as tourist destinations. Additionally, a 'growing interest in Wales's rich history'<sup>24</sup> and culture emerged in the late eighteenth century. This 'Celtic Revival', encouraged by 'Briton mad'<sup>25</sup> poets and painters, and seen in the renewal of the Eisteddfod, and the creation of Welsh cultural societies in London such as the Cymmrodorion, is understood to have encouraged tourists to visit the land of these ancient Britons.<sup>26</sup>

Contemporary travel books can illuminate the attractions of Wales to early tourists in several ways. Guidebooks included information about places that their authors considered would be of interest to their readers. For example, *The Cambrian traveller's guide, and pocket companion*, published in 1808, synthesises the tours of twelve different authors.<sup>27</sup> Its title page includes an extensive list of thirty-four types of attraction, including castles, mountains, bridges, fields of battle, cromlechs and 'Works of Iron, Tin, Copper, &c',<sup>28</sup> showing the array of attractions that Wales was seen to offer. Accounts of journeys taken in Wales show the individual traveller's own interests through the itinerary they chose for themselves. Lastly, the attractions recommended by local people during these tours show

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<sup>23</sup> John Davies, Nigel Jenkins, Menna Baines, et. al. 'Tourism', *The Welsh Academy Encyclopedia of Wales*, Available at <https://search.credoreference.com/articles/Qm9va0FydGjlbGU6MTExNjcxNw==>, Accessed 21 May 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

<sup>25</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

<sup>27</sup> George Nicholson, *The Cambrian traveller's guide, and pocket companion*, (Stourport, 1808), title page.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholson, *The Cambrian traveller's guide*, title page.

what the Welsh expected tourists to want to see, perhaps through experience of being asked by previous tourists for particular sights. Therefore the travel literature of the period will help to identify the main attractions for visitors to Wales in the years surrounding the events at Fishguard.

A key feature in travel literature concerning Wales in this period is picturesque scenery. It was much sought out by tourists - Morgan, in addition to visiting family in Wales, travelled in order to 'enjoy the prospects of a much-admired and picturesque country'.<sup>29</sup> The idea of picturesque travel was popularised by Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye*. This proposed a 'new object of pursuit' - to evaluate scenery 'by the rules of picturesque beauty',<sup>30</sup> or how well it conformed to the principles of composition used in landscape painting. Gilpin's book was popular - Morgan observed that the Wye had been 'consecrated to fame by Mr. Gilpin',<sup>31</sup> it was reprinted several times,<sup>32</sup> and many of the tours refer to him when attempting descriptions of picturesque scenery.<sup>33</sup> Although the influence of this book is clear, many of the early travel writers were not so strict in their adherence to Gilpin's definition of the term picturesque. While he frequently declares scenes 'not picturesque' due to some deficiency in their 'composition',<sup>34</sup> even going so far as to suggest that 'a mallet judiciously used'<sup>35</sup> would render Tintern Abbey more picturesque, some subsequent writers use the term to refer to views that are pleasant to look at, regardless of their potential to form a correct scene on paper.<sup>36</sup> Despite this variation in usage, it is evident that viewing picturesque scenery was an essential part of a trip to Wales.

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<sup>29</sup> Mary Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven, in the year 1791*. (London, 1795), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. relative chiefly to picturesque beauty : made in the Summer of the year 1770*. (London, 1800), p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.120.

<sup>32</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, title page. The copy I used was the fourth edition from 1800.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory, or, cursory sketches of the Welsh territories. With a chart, comprehending at one view, the advisable route - best inns - distances - and objects most worthy of attention*, (Salisbury, 1800), p.179, 185, 197; James Baker, *A picturesque guide through Wales and the Marches; interspersed with the most interesting subjects of antiquity in that principality. Vol. II*, (Worcester, 1795), p.40; John Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales, in the year 1803, and at other times. Containing views of the history, antiquities, and customs of that part of the principality; and interspersed with observations on its scenery, agriculture, botany, mineralogy, trade and manufactures*, (London, 1804), p.185.

<sup>34</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, p.31, see also p.15 & 59.

<sup>35</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, p.49.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.134.



Visitors to Wales at this time also looked to experience the sublime - a feeling of 'agreeable horror' produced by experiencing 'danger at a safe distance'.<sup>37</sup> Tourists' enthusiasm at encountering vertiginous drops on mountains and country roads,<sup>38</sup> the 'Stygian horror'<sup>39</sup> of a cave, or the power of a waterfall<sup>40</sup> suggests that this sensation was sought out by visitors. Despite the notion that the sublime stems from danger at a safe distance, tourists continued to highlight the actual dangers of a journey in Wales - for example Morgan writes of her fear that she should 'fall in, and perish'<sup>41</sup> in one of the disused coal mines that peppered the Pembrokeshire countryside, and Pennant describes descending Snowdon 'with great hazard'<sup>42</sup> after being overtaken by a thunderstorm. Seemingly these descriptions of danger serve to entice rather than deter the reader and potential visitor, perhaps producing ideas of adventure to be had in Wales. This is illustrated by those tourists who seek out danger - Malkin, being informed of a man who was 'very much scorched' after falling into an ash pile produced by a fire in a mine, proceeds to poke a stick into the ground at the site in the hopes of seeing some smoke.<sup>43</sup> Therefore the sublime landscape of Wales was an attraction to tourists - due to its ability to produce emotions of agreeable horror and offer the prospect of personal adventure.

Part of the appeal of Wales lay in 'perceptions of its exoticism and alterity'.<sup>44</sup> Travel guides made note of things that were different in Wales than in England, and tourists were excited to observe these differences for themselves. For example, Morgan took pleasure in listening to road workers speaking to each other in Welsh as this meant she had 'fully arrived'<sup>45</sup> in Wales. From the 1770s English perceptions of Wales began to change from that of 'an inaccessible terrain and backward nation'<sup>46</sup> to more positive views based on its culture.

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<sup>37</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p.42.

<sup>38</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.107; Edward Pugh, *Cambria Depicta: a Tour Through North Wales, Illustrated with Picturesque Views*, (London, 1816) p.150.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Heath Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales, From Materials Collected During Two Excursions in the Year 1803*, (London, 1804) p.213.

<sup>40</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.25; Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.347.

<sup>41</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.229.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Pennant, *The Journey to Snowdon*, (London, 1781), p.164.

<sup>43</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.99 & 100.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', pp.101-102.

<sup>45</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.122.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

Tourists began to be 'intrigued by selected aspects'<sup>47</sup> of Welsh culture, particularly things that brought to mind Wales' ancient traditions, such as harp music - Warner was 'electrified' when he found that his inn at Conwy offered a harpist, as he associated the instrument with 'the idea of the ancient bards'.<sup>48</sup> Experiences of Welsh culture began at home, through prints of famous scenes<sup>49</sup> and 'books of travels',<sup>50</sup> which led to the formation of a tourist gaze. Urry and Larsen argue that this 'is constructed through signs',<sup>51</sup> hence visitors to Wales looked for the stereotypically Welsh cultural artefacts, such as harp music, language and customs that they had been taught to expect through books and prints. The tendency in these books and prints to take 'an instance of individual peculiarity'<sup>52</sup> as representative of Welsh character in general, led to confusion and disappointment for tourists, who expected to see the examples of Welsh culture they had read about. For example, Morgan is confused at the appearance of the Welsh as they do not resemble 'Mr B—'s very beautiful print of the Welsh Peasants'<sup>53</sup> upon which she had based her expectations; she is also disappointed by the infrequency of harp music, which she did not encounter until two months after arriving in Wales, but had 'expected to have heard'<sup>54</sup> at every inn. So a desire to encounter the ancient and exotic culture of Wales that they had learned about from books and prints was a draw for tourists during this period.

In a similar way, the history of Wales was also an attraction for tourists, as part of the 'growing appreciation'<sup>55</sup> of Welsh history and culture which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century. This appreciation is reflected in the works of Pennant<sup>56</sup> and Fenton,<sup>57</sup> who produced in-depth historical tours of north Wales and Pembrokeshire respectively. Pennant's work was particularly influential,<sup>58</sup> featuring in many of the later travel guides and

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Freeman, 'Perceptions of Welshness: Tourists' Impressions of the Material and Traditional Culture of Wales, 1770–1840', *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies*, Vol.53. No.1. (2015), p.68.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Warner, *A walk through Wales, in August 1797*, (Bath, 1798), p.148.

<sup>49</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p.35.

<sup>50</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.xii.

<sup>51</sup> Urry & Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p.4.

<sup>52</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.256.

<sup>53</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.275.

<sup>54</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.317.

<sup>55</sup> Jones, Tully & Williams, 'Travel Writing and Wales', p.101.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Pennant, *A tour in Wales*, (London, 1778).

<sup>57</sup> Richard Fenton, *A historical tour through Pembrokeshire*, (London, 1810).

<sup>58</sup> R. Paul Evans, 'Thomas Pennant (1726-1798): 'The father of Cambrian tourists'', *Welsh History Review*, Vol.13. Iss.4, (1986) p.395.

tours, for example Malkin, in his book of 1804, intended to give 'the same attention to South Wales, which Mr. Pennant has bestowed on the North'.<sup>59</sup> Lots of tour writers included historical information about the sites they visited, and among the descriptions of picturesque scenery were accounts of visits to castles, churches, abbeys and ancient stones. Sometimes these historical sites were seen as decorative, adding 'consequence to a scene',<sup>60</sup> but they could equally be valued for their history - Malkin visits the ruins of a monastery 'only worth notice on account of their antiquity'.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, many travellers placed a great importance on being in the spot where events of historical significance had happened. Morgan believed that if a place had been rendered famous by a 'remarkable event having taken place' there, it 'immediately becomes the object of curiosity and veneration'.<sup>62</sup> This can be seen in the *Cambrian Directory* - the author experiences 'pleasure, mixed with reverential awe'<sup>63</sup> at Rhuddlan marsh due to its historical associations. This reverence for history is further shown in visitors' concern for the authenticity of the sites they visit. Malkin considered Cardiff castle to be 'distinguished by military and political events',<sup>64</sup> but felt it was diminished by modern alterations. This mixture of aesthetic and historical appreciation shows that sites had various aspects that appealed to visitors at the same time. Despite this, it is clear that many visitors were interested in Wales due to the history attached to certain places, therefore Wales' history can be considered an attraction to early tourists.

Tourists were equally keen to hear legendary stories connected with the places they visited. Wales had a reputation as a 'land of legends, mountains and romance',<sup>65</sup> so that some tourists sought out such stories on their travels. Morgan was 'anxious to gain all the information about'<sup>66</sup> Merlin from her friends in Carmarthen. She goes on to give a twenty seven page account of Merlin and Arthur,<sup>67</sup> evidently she considers this legendary

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<sup>59</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.622.

<sup>60</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, p.14.

<sup>61</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.99.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.101.

<sup>63</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.131.

<sup>64</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.137.

<sup>65</sup> T. J. Llewelyn Prichard, *The Cambrian Balnea: or guide to the watering places of Wales, marine and inland*, (London, 1825), p.v.

<sup>66</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.159.

<sup>67</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, pp.161-188.

information to be of interest to her readers also. Tourists' interest in legends is further demonstrated by their disappointment when a story could not be obtained for a particular place. For example Malkin was unable to learn whether 'any tradition was attached'<sup>68</sup> to an 'upright stone monument' in a churchyard he visited, and Ayton considers it 'very unsatisfactory'<sup>69</sup> to be able to give his readers only the intriguing name of a tumulus - 'the Grave of Sampson's Finger' - with no story. Fantastical stories were not to every tourist's taste - the author of the *Cambrian Directory* found his guide at Snowdon to be 'too partial to the marvellous'.<sup>70</sup> But for others, legendary stories, although less important than later, more credible history, were part of the experience of visiting Wales.<sup>71</sup> Indeed Malkin opens his book by stating that separating 'truth from fable' was 'of little importance' as the mixture of the two was 'far from uninteresting',<sup>72</sup> demonstrating that the veracity of stories was not always important if they were interesting. Pennant's historical tour also invokes legend from time to time - relating both the 'miraculous' and the 'natural' stories of St Wenefrede's spring.<sup>73</sup> Although stating that he does not believe in the legend,<sup>74</sup> he clearly considers it to be interesting enough to include in his book. Therefore a story attached to a place, whether historical or legendary, acted as an attraction to tourists at this time.

Scientific interest also attracted visitors to the particular botanical and geological features of Wales. As with history and the viewing of picturesque scenery, contemporary travel writing treats these subjects with a range of depth. Some are clear in the title of their work that they will contain 'observations on mineralogy'<sup>75</sup> or 'botanical researches'<sup>76</sup> and use scientific terms and Latin names in their texts. At the other end of the scale, some authors

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<sup>68</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.369.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain, undertaken in the summer of the year 1813, and commencing from the Land's-End, Cornwall, Volume 1*. (London, 1978), p.122.

<sup>70</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.105.

<sup>71</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.47.

<sup>72</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> Pennant, *A Tour in Wales*, p.31.

<sup>74</sup> Pennant, *A Tour in Wales*, pp.36-37.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Aikin, *Journal of a tour through North Wales and part of Shropshire; with observations in mineralogy, and other branches of natural history*, (London, 1797), title page.

<sup>76</sup> John Evans, *A Tour Through Part of North Wales, In the Year 1798, and at Other Times; Principally Undertaken with a View to Botanical Researches in that Alpine Country; Interspersed with Observations on Its Scenery, Agriculture, Manufactures, Customs, History, and Antiquities*. (London, 1800), title page.

merely point out nice looking trees<sup>77</sup> or interesting rocks.<sup>78</sup> Those texts that don't supply any scientific information do still acknowledge the public interest in these subjects - Morgan writes that the curious 'shells and marine plants' in Pembrokeshire would be a 'source of amusement and research'<sup>79</sup> for botanists, while the author of the *Cambrian Directory* is 'strenuously recommended' by a fellow traveller to look at a 'strata of marble'<sup>80</sup> in a nearby rock. So one draw for visitors at this time was the opportunity to indulge scientific interest and observe plants and rocks that were particular to Wales.

Feats of industry and engineering were also of interest to visitors. Wales was rapidly industrialising during this period<sup>81</sup> so tourists frequently visited industrial sites, such as ironworks, quarries and mines to see the new and developing technologies at work. For example Morgan wrote that coal mines were 'undoubtedly places of great curiosity', and had 'resolved to descend' one in Pembrokeshire until she heard of the risk of suffocation.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, man made structures such as canals and bridges drew the admiration of tourists. At the Glamorganshire canal, Malkin found that the 'wonders of art ... almost rival those of nature',<sup>83</sup> while the 'famous Pont Y Pridd'<sup>84</sup> was celebrated by visitors for the ingenuity and perseverance of its construction,<sup>85</sup> as much as for its beauty. Industrial work was even seen to add to the picturesque quality of a scene to some extent - Gilpin found the 'life, and bustle' of a coal wharf on the Wye to produce 'a picturesque assemblage'.<sup>86</sup> These man-made wonders were not universally approved of - the author of the *Cambrian Directory* considered the canal that was so admired by Malkin to be 'an intrusion ... much to be lamented'.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Malkin considered ironworks to be 'every where similar'<sup>88</sup> and so only visited one example - suggesting that interest in industrial sites could be limited.

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<sup>77</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.135; Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.72 & 112.

<sup>78</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, pp.526-527; Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.54.

<sup>79</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.299.

<sup>80</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.25.

<sup>81</sup> Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, pp.175-6 & 179.

<sup>82</sup> Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, p.228.

<sup>83</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, pp.166-167.

<sup>84</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.21.

<sup>85</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, pp.86-88.

<sup>86</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, p.22.

<sup>87</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.21.

<sup>88</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.169.

Despite this, such sites continued to be a key feature of a tour in Wales, therefore industrial works and feats of engineering can be seen as attractions to tourists.

Although by no means an exhaustive list, this chapter has explored the key features that attracted tourists to Wales in the years surrounding the French landing at Fishguard. These attractions ranged from more niche interests such as botany and geology, to the history, culture, and picturesque scenery to which almost every travel writer referred. The story of the French landing at Fishguard fits into two of these categories of attractions - history and stories. As a recent event, the French invasion was not seen as historical to contemporaries - Baker writes that there is no interest for the 'antiquary' on the road from Fishguard to St Davids.<sup>89</sup> However, part of the attraction of history for tourists was to be in the place where historically significant events had happened. In this sense, the site of the French landing certainly appealed to early tourists such as Reed, who 'visited the spot' where the French landed, which he considered had 'now become an object of curiosity and importance to the inquisitive traveller'.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Baker recommends the landing site as 'a digression'<sup>91</sup> from the road, which shows that visiting the location of this event was an interest for visitors in Wales, if only a minor one. A visit to Fishguard would also have satisfied tourists' desires to hear more legendary stories in connection with places. The event of the French invasion produced an array of folkloric stories which tourists were keen to hear and locals were keen to tell. For instance several writers include the 'often repeated and sometimes believed'<sup>92</sup> story that the French surrendered after mistaking a crowd of women in traditional Welsh costume for a regiment of soldiers.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, as the story of the French landing at Fishguard represents two of the different types of attraction identified in this chapter - history and stories - it can be said that it did constitute a 'tourist asset' for Fishguard. Chapter two will investigate to what extent this asset was 'brilliantly exploited' by the local people in the years following the event.

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<sup>89</sup> Baker, *A picturesque guide through Wales and the Marches*, p.188.

<sup>90</sup> William Reed, *The remains of William Reed, late of Thornbury; including rambles in Ireland, with other compositions in prose, his correspondence; and poetical productions*. (London, 1815), p.89 & 88.

<sup>91</sup> Baker, *A picturesque guide through Wales and the Marches*, p.188.

<sup>92</sup> Margaret S. Walker, 'The Reverend Henry Vincent, 1793-1865, a neglected Pembrokeshire Antiquarian', *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society* Vol.6. (1994-1995) p.71.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Reed, *The remains of William Reed*, pp.88-89; Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.456; Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.127.

## Chapter Two.

How far did tourist interest in the French landing impact the town of Fishguard, 1795-1835?

This chapter will investigate whether the people of Fishguard were able, as Quinault argues, to brilliantly exploit the event of the French landing in 1797 as a 'tourist asset'.<sup>94</sup> It will first examine the early tourists' interest in Fishguard and the locations connected with the French landing, and will consider whether the popularity of these attractions could outweigh the town's perceived physical disadvantages to initiate a tourist industry for Fishguard. It will then chart the development of the town over a period of approximately forty years, beginning just before the invasion in 1795. Using a compilation of sources including tourist descriptions, trade directories, Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary*, and the 'Statistical Account of the Parish of Fishguard', it will build up a picture of changes in the buildings, occupation and population experienced by the town, and consider whether these changes can be attributed to the effects of tourism or other factors. Finally, it will examine the different types of services that local people offered to tourists, such as provision of food, accommodation, and local guides. This will show how the local area was able to profit from interest in the event. This chapter will conclude that although tourists were interested in and did visit Fishguard due to its fame as the site of the French landing, its remote location and the existence of other profitable industries in town meant that the inhabitants only ever provided for tourists in a small way and so only minimally engaged in tourism in this period.

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the historical significance and folkloric stories of the French landing at Fishguard were an attraction to early tourists, some of whom were keen to visit the site of this famous event. It is difficult to ascertain numerically the popularity of the site. Although Vincent recalls that 'hundreds were wont to crowd to the spot every summer',<sup>95</sup> only thirty-two tourist accounts mentioned Fishguard between the years of 1662 and 1851, mostly 'between 1790 and 1840',<sup>96</sup> out of a total of 742 written

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<sup>94</sup> Quinault, 'The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire in 1797: A Bicentennial Assessment', p.641.

<sup>95</sup> In Walker, 'The Reverend Henry Vincent, 1793-1865', p.70.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Freeman, 'Fishguard', *Early tourists in Wales*, Available at <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/places/fishguard/>, Accessed 24 May 2024.

accounts of journeys in Wales in these years.<sup>97</sup> Obviously not everyone made a written record of their travels, but it seems likely that only a small number of tourists visited Fishguard at this time. From 1797 onwards, most of those that did visit and write about Fishguard mentioned the landing site as a place of interest, indeed it was often seen as the only interesting thing about the town. In 1813, Ayton found nothing in the town's history, apart from the French landing, 'that is in any degree more impressive than its present business of catching and eating herrings'.<sup>98</sup> Other tourists mention the beautiful 'narrow wooded valley'<sup>99</sup> of the Gwaun, a 'very distinct echo'<sup>100</sup> in the churchyard, and the town's 'remarkably salubrious'<sup>101</sup> air, however these aspects of the town are not regularly taken up by other writers, so it is clear that the instance of the French invasion was by far the most popular of Fishguard's attractions.

Fishguard town itself was seen to be 'so filthy, so ill built, and so uncivilized, as almost to be interesting on those very accounts'.<sup>102</sup> Several descriptions pronounce it a 'miserable'<sup>103</sup> port or fishing town, although some of these seem to be copied from other accounts by people who did not visit the town, rather than original descriptions.<sup>104</sup> Despite published tours that declared Fishguard to be 'by no means a desirable place to remain long at',<sup>105</sup> this did not necessarily deter visitors - Ayton had been warned to 'fortify [himself] against the worst'<sup>106</sup> before visiting, and was thus pleasantly surprised by the town. Additionally, being renowned as a miserable town was not enough to exclude it from a place in the 'principal

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<sup>97</sup> Michael Freeman, 'numbers of tours', *Early tourists in Wales*, Available at <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/about-this-site/number-of-know-tours/>, Accessed 24 May 2024. The estimate of the total number of accounts of tours is for between 1790 and 1839.

<sup>98</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.125.

<sup>99</sup> Baker, *A picturesque guide through Wales and the Marches*, p.186.

<sup>100</sup> Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales*, p.305.

<sup>101</sup> Anon. *Wales illustrated, in a series of views, comprising the picturesque scenery, towns, castles, seats of the nobility & gentry, antiquities, &c.* (London, 1830), p.451.

<sup>102</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.453.

<sup>103</sup> Henry Skrine, *Two successive tours throughout the whole of Wales, with several of the adjacent English counties; so as to form a comprehensive view of the picturesque beauty, the peculiar manners, and the fine remains of antiquity, in that interesting part of the British Island*, (London, 1798), p.92; J. T. Barber, *A Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire. Comprehending a general survey of the picturesque scenery, remains of antiquity, historical events, peculiar manner, and commercial situations, of that interesting portion of the British Empire*. (London, 1803), p.91.

<sup>104</sup> For example, the 'Principal pleasure tours' reproduces Skrine's description of Fishguard almost word for word. Anon. *An account of the principal pleasure tours in England and Wales*, (London, 1822) p.193.

<sup>105</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.56.

<sup>106</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.123.



pleasure tours in England and Wales'.<sup>107</sup> Presumably Fishguard's attractions overrode these physical disadvantages to some degree.

Although the fame of the French landing created a tourist interest in Fishguard that was not completely deterred by the poor physical state of the town, this interest does not seem to have greatly contributed to the development of the town in the years following the event. Changes that occurred in the town's built environment and population during this period were either minimal, already in place before the invasion, or can be more clearly attributed to other causes than increased prosperity due to tourism.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Fishguard was the second largest town in Pembrokeshire 'with regard to extent and number of houses'.<sup>108</sup> According to the 'Statistical account of Fishguard' in 1795 there were 400 houses, while *Leigh's new picture of England and Wales* of 1820 estimated that this number had increased to 421.<sup>109</sup> The population statistics in the latter book are derived from the 1811 census, so it is likely that the housing estimate also comes from this earlier time. The small increase in housing in the town over this sixteen year period seems to be linked to the prosperity of the shipping trade rather than tourism - in 1795, it was written that the lower town next to the harbour 'continues to increase daily'.<sup>110</sup> As this was before the French landing brought Fishguard to prominence, the expansion of the lower town is evidently not linked with tourism. Furthermore, Malkin noted in 1803 that there was 'much building going forward in the town',<sup>111</sup> but he also is referring to the harbour and shipping business in the lower town. Even sources that do refer to tourist activities taking place in Fishguard make no mention of buildings to facilitate these activities. For example Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary* refers to 'sea-bathing'<sup>112</sup> at Fishguard, but mentions no bath-houses, while the entry for Tenby in the same publication

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<sup>107</sup> Anon. *An account of the principal pleasure tours in England and Wales*, p.193.

<sup>108</sup> "Gwinfardd Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', *Cambrian Register*, Vol.1. (1795), p.255. Freeman attributes this article to Richard Fenton here - <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/material-culture/music/bagpipes/>.

<sup>109</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.260; Samuel Leigh, *Leigh's New Picture of England and Wales, comprehending a description of the principal towns, ancient remains, natural and artificial curiosities, soil and produce, agriculture, manufactures, rivers and canals, principal seats, bathing places, also, historical & biographical notices, and a synopsis of the counties. &c. Embellished with numerous views, and a correct general map.* (London, 1820), p.657.

<sup>110</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.255.

<sup>111</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.454.

<sup>112</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Wales, Volume I, third edition.* (London, 1845), p.332.

writes at length of the 'baths, provided with every convenience'<sup>113</sup> along with other accommodations for tourists. This further confirms that the building work observed over several years at Fishguard was in connection with its shipping trade and not for the convenience of tourists.

The number of inns might be seen to reflect the interest of tourists in a place, as this facility would be expected to increase in order to accommodate a larger number of visitors. In Fishguard, the number of inns seems to have stayed fairly even over the period following the French invasion. The 'Statistical Account' implies there are two in 1795, the main one run by an 'old superannuated mariner',<sup>114</sup> probably the 'Captain Llaugharne'<sup>115</sup> encountered by later travellers. By the time of Evans' and Malkin's tours in 1803, it seems there is only one inn - 'a small house without a wine or spirit licence',<sup>116</sup> which continued in existence until at least 1807, as 'the Dwelling-house of Thomas Laugharne, innkeeper' is then being used as an auction room.<sup>117</sup> In 1813, Ayton stayed at an inn run by 'Mr. and Mrs. Williams';<sup>118</sup> Pigot & Co.'s directory of 1835 lists only two inns - the Castle and the Commercial,<sup>119</sup> while two of the 'taverns and public houses' are run by people named Williams. This is obviously a common name, and inns could have changed hands several times in the intervening years, but perhaps these public houses may also have offered accommodation to travellers. Furthermore, this directory lists no 'lodging house keepers' as it does for Tenby,<sup>120</sup> suggesting that this form of accommodation was either not available in Fishguard or was run on a more informal basis. So although there were changes to the proprietors of the inns in Fishguard, the number of inns available to visitors was either one or two for the whole period 1795-1835. This suggests that there was no great increase in the number of visitors that needed accommodating, that the 'numerous visitors'<sup>121</sup> that

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<sup>113</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Wales, Volume II, third edition*. (London, 1845), p.394.

<sup>114</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.257.

<sup>115</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.435.

<sup>116</sup> Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales*, p.305; Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.435.

<sup>117</sup> 'Advertising', *The Cambrian*, 4th April 1807, p.3. Available at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3321440/3321443/8/thomas%20laugharne>, Accessed 25 May 2024.

<sup>118</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.123.

<sup>119</sup> J. Pigot, *Pigot & Co.'s Directory of Derbys, Herefs ... , 1835*, (London, 1835), p.757.

<sup>120</sup> Pigot, *Pigot & Co.'s Directory of Derbys, Herefs ... , 1835*, p.795.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Wales, Volume 1*. p.332.

were attracted there in the summer must have stayed elsewhere, and thus that the French landing had little impact on this aspect of the town.

Many accounts of Fishguard over this period expressed an expectation that it would develop into a resort,<sup>122</sup> or surprise that it had not done so.<sup>123</sup> Throughout the period it is referred to as a port, market or fishing town, and never as a resort, even by those who recognised the tourist interest in the town.<sup>124</sup> The development of leisure facilities in Tenby at the beginning of the nineteenth century has been described as a 'substantial and calculated investment'<sup>125</sup> which allowed Tenby to develop into a resort. The only comparative investment in Fishguard was the establishment of a market and post office, 'under the auspices of the truly patriotic Mr Knox'.<sup>126</sup> This influential figure in the town, sold his house at Llanstinan<sup>127</sup> and 'took up residence in London'<sup>128</sup> in consequence of his son Colonel Knox's alleged mishandling of the French invasion. Thus one of the eventual effects of the event of the French landing at Fishguard, other than increased notice of tourists, was to remove an individual who had previously invested in services that benefited the town, for which Fishguard was seen to be 'highly indebted',<sup>129</sup> and who might be expected to contribute further to its development.

A further reason that Fishguard may not have developed as expected into a resort was the success of its fishing and shipping industries during this period. In 1767 Tenby was described as 'the most compleat Ruins of an old Town',<sup>130</sup> its industries had declined and so the town was in need of 'a new economic role'. Fishguard seemingly had no need of this. Although in 1795 it was said that there was no district in Wales 'in which there is less provision for rendering the population useful',<sup>131</sup> it was also described as a 'large flourishing place ...

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<sup>122</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.246.

<sup>123</sup> Anon. *Wales illustrated, in a series of views*, p.451.

<sup>124</sup> Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Wales, Volume 1*, p.331 & 332.

<sup>125</sup> Peter Borsay, 'From port to resort: Tenby and narratives of transition, 1760-1914', *Resorts and Ports: European Seaside Towns Since 1700*, ed. by Peter Borsay & John K. Walton (Bristol, 2011), p.91.

<sup>126</sup> Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales*, p.305.

<sup>127</sup> Fenton, *A historical tour through Pembrokeshire*, p.293.

<sup>128</sup> J. E. Thomas, *Social Disorder in Britain 1750-1850: The Power of the Gentry, Radicalism and Religion in Wales*, (London, 2011), p.83.

<sup>129</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.258.

<sup>130</sup> Borsay, 'From port to resort: Tenby and narratives of transition, 1760-1914', p.88.

<sup>131</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.260.

there being no ruins',<sup>132</sup> as there were in Tenby. The growth of the shipping industry in Fishguard from the late eighteenth century onward is clear - in 1795 the 'shipping and trade' were already 'very considerable, and daily increasing',<sup>133</sup> and in 1811 the 'grove of masts' in the harbour were 'of late and modern growth' with the lower town having sprung 'from its shipping and commerce within this half a century'.<sup>134</sup> So it seems that in this early period Fishguard was prospering from its trade, and although it was seen that the 'fishery ... might be turned to much greater account',<sup>135</sup> it did continue to be 'the principal employ of the inhabitants'<sup>136</sup> until it became unproductive and was discontinued.<sup>137</sup> So during the period following the French landing there was no need for Fishguard to develop into a resort or invest heavily in tourism as its residents were already occupied by fishing and shipping.

Another indication that the town did not benefit from increased business due to the tourist interest in the French landing was the relatively slow growth of its population. Between 1801 and 1831 the population of Fishguard increased by 32%,<sup>138</sup> which is a slower rate than Wales as a whole at 53%,<sup>139</sup> and much smaller than that of Tenby for the same period which expanded by 130%.<sup>140</sup> So neither the flourishing shipping industry or the tourist interest translated into an expansion in population such as that experienced by Tenby over the same period, implying that the French invasion story had not created an increase in occupation to support a larger population and thus had little impact on the town.

Evidently, Fishguard did not develop extensively as a tourist destination, despite the fame of the French landing story. This may be due in part to its geographical position - Bohls and Duncan state that the Wye Valley's 'relative accessibility ... made it a popular tourist

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<sup>132</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.256.

<sup>133</sup> Baker, *A picturesque guide through Wales and the Marches*, p.186.

<sup>134</sup> Fenton, *A historical tour through Pembrokeshire*, pp.572-573.

<sup>135</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.255.

<sup>136</sup> Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales*, p.302.

<sup>137</sup> Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Wales, Volume 1*, p.333.

<sup>138</sup> GB Historical GIS/University of Portsmouth, Fishguard CP/AP through time | Population Statistics | Total Population, *A Vision of Britain through Time*. Available at: [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10199086/cube/TOT\\_POP](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10199086/cube/TOT_POP), Accessed: 26 May 2024.

<sup>139</sup> GB Historical GIS/University of Portsmouth, Wales Dep through time | Population Statistics | Total Population, *A Vision of Britain through Time*. Available at: [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10001055/cube/TOT\\_POP](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10001055/cube/TOT_POP), Accessed: 26 May 2024.

<sup>140</sup> Borsay, 'From port to resort: Tenby and narratives of transition, 1760-1914', p.90.

destination',<sup>141</sup> whereas Fishguard is further away from England and somewhat more difficult to get to. Malkin observed that the people of Pembrokeshire considered their county to be at a disadvantage in terms of trade due to its remote location 'which precludes them from the benefits of an advantageous traffic'.<sup>142</sup> This could equally be applied to the tourist industry - in 1795 visitors were seen to be 'too servilely adhering'<sup>143</sup> to the main road between Cardigan and Haverfordwest and thereby missing Fishguard. The attention that the French landing brought to the town may have encouraged some to turn off the main road and visit, however even in 1875 Fishguard was still considered to be 'untrodden ground for tourists'<sup>144</sup> - evidently the town never became a particularly popular destination.

Although it is clear that Fishguard was comparatively unpopular as a tourist destination, and that tourism had little impact on the development of the town, the people of Fishguard did provide services for those visitors that arrived in the years following the French landing. One such service was food. Several of the tourists that wrote about Fishguard alluded to food, for example the author of the *Cambrian Directory* enjoyed a 'most comfortable meal'<sup>145</sup> at Trehowel, the farmhouse where the French had their headquarters. It is unclear whether Mr Mortimer, the host, profited from this service. Freeman writes that in the late eighteenth century, people living in remote cottages where travellers called for refreshment 'often made no charge and even refused anything offered'.<sup>146</sup> In Fishguard itself, Captain Laugharne's unlicensed inn provided food, but it was 'whatever happens to be in the house' and did not cater to Malkin's 'nicety of palate'.<sup>147</sup> This food certainly was paid for, as this innkeeper would 'chalk his charge on the corner of the table'.<sup>148</sup> In 1795, 'neither of the inns'<sup>149</sup> in Fishguard had a wine licence, meaning that travellers sometimes felt obliged to acquire wine from the inhabitants of the town. Bant, travelling in 1808, sent servants to call at several houses around town to ask for wine, and was willing to pay 'whatever they

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<sup>141</sup> Bohls & Duncan, *Travel Writing*, p.137.

<sup>142</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.431.

<sup>143</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.246.

<sup>144</sup> Anon. 'North-West Pembrokeshire', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol.118. Iss. 719. (1875) p.287.

<sup>145</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.56.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Freeman, 'food for tourists', *Early tourists in Wales*, Available at <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/practicalities/food-for-tourists/>, Accessed 26 May 2024.

<sup>147</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.455.

<sup>148</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.257.

<sup>149</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.257.

chose'.<sup>150</sup> So although some refreshment may have been provided freely out of a sense of hospitality, both professional innkeepers and other local inhabitants, in Fishguard and in the surrounding countryside, profited from providing food and drink to tourists during this period.

Another service provided to tourists was accommodation. It has been established that there were one or two inns in Fishguard throughout the period following the French landing. Although at this early time, inns largely catered to 'commercial travellers, lawyers and others on business',<sup>151</sup> increasing numbers of tourists meant that a lack of accommodation was a problem across Wales. Several tourists write of having to extend a day's travel as their intended inn was full,<sup>152</sup> and Malkin sometimes finds it necessary to warn his readers of long stretches of country 'without ... the most humble accommodation'.<sup>153</sup> So Fishguard offering two inns was ahead of many places in Wales at this time. However the accommodation that did exist was considered substandard, in both 'accommodations and attendance'<sup>154</sup> - Wyndham found it 'so villanous ... that we thought it prudent to continue our stage to Cardigan'.<sup>155</sup> The mariner turned innkeeper was seen to be 'out of his element',<sup>156</sup> yet Malkin recognised that he 'means to be civil', although he still recommended that travellers should 'avoid a night'<sup>157</sup> in Fishguard if possible. Therefore although Fishguard's inns provided the service of accommodation to travellers, these were not of a very high standard, which may have deterred some visitors from spending the night and thus lessened the income that Fishguard was able to make from tourism.

Early tourists in Wales used local guides either for safety, for example in ascending mountains, or for informative guides to castles, churches and towns. People local to Fishguard provided a service for visitors in both these respects. For example Ayton, knowing

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<sup>150</sup> Millicent Bant, quoted in Kathryn Walchester, 'The Picturesque and the Beastly: Wales and the Absence of Welsh in the Journals of Lady's Companions Eliza and Millicent Bant (1806, 1808)', *Modern Languages Open*, Vol.0. Iss.1. (2023) p.8.

<sup>151</sup> Michael Freeman, 'accommodation', *Early tourists in Wales*, Available at <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/practicalities/accommodation/>, Accessed 26 May 2024.

<sup>152</sup> For example, Morgan, *A tour to Milford Haven*, pp.124-125; Warner, *A walk through Wales, in August 1797*, pp.116-117.

<sup>153</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.194, see also p.542.

<sup>154</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.257.

<sup>155</sup> Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, *A gentleman's tour through Monmouthshire and Wales, in the months of June and July, 1774. A new edition. To which is added, an account of a journey into Wales, by George Lord Lyttleton*. (London, 1781) p.94.

<sup>156</sup> "Dyfed", 'Statistical account of the parish of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire', p.257.

<sup>157</sup> Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.455.

that there was 'some intricacy in the roads'<sup>158</sup> between St David's and Fishguard, hired a local girl to convey his party safely between the two towns. The people around Fishguard also operated as informational guides, providing interesting stories at sites connected with the French invasion - Mr Mortimer of Trehowel 'explained every minutiae' of the French taking his farmhouse for their headquarters, and 'pointed out their camp'.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, Ayton's guides to the sites connected with the French landing seem to have been well practised in showing visitors around the sites in question - he and his companions were made 'actors in the living scene' by 'having all its parts unfolded to us in the order and in the places in which they successively happened'.<sup>160</sup> Hudson points out that much work connected with tourism was 'opportunistic'<sup>161</sup> and done alongside other occupations. Ayton's guide between towns was performing this task in lieu of 'a much more laborious employment', she received 'a considerable advance of wages'<sup>162</sup> from Ayton, in comparison to what she would otherwise have earned. This shows that people were able to earn well from occasional guiding jobs and supports Vincent's claim that during his childhood in the opening years of the nineteenth century, locals telling their stories of the French landing to tourists were able to turn it to 'profitable account'.<sup>163</sup> So providing a service as a guide was an occasional source of income for local people in and around Fishguard, particularly in the years following the French landing, as tourists wished to be taken to the particular sites connected with the event.

Therefore, although there was much interest in visiting the site of the French landing at Fishguard, this did not seem to develop into the creation of a tourist industry in the town. The notoriety of the event was exploited in a small way by local people, who took the opportunity to provide services such as food, accommodation and tour guides for tourists when they were required. However this did not translate into major changes to the town's occupation and infrastructure over this period, as did tourist interest in the nearby town of Tenby. The small changes that did occur in town, such as the building work observed by

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<sup>158</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.121.

<sup>159</sup> Cliff, of Worcester, *The Cambrian directory*, p.56.

<sup>160</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.125.

<sup>161</sup> Brian Hudson, 'Tourism in Borrow's *Wild Wales*, 1854', *Geography*, Vol.86. Iss.1. (2001) p.6.

<sup>162</sup> Ayton, *A voyage round Great Britain*, p.122.

<sup>163</sup> In Walker, 'The Reverend Henry Vincent, 1793-1865', p.70.

several tourists, are more likely to be attributed to the prosperity of the commercial and fishing industries at this early time, than to any emerging tourist industry in the town. Thus it cannot really be said that the people of Fishguard 'exploited' this opportunity to its full extent, as their actions had seemingly little impact on the town itself, and change that did happen had other stimuli.



## Conclusion.

The French landing at Fishguard in 1797 was a major event in the history of the town. This dissertation has investigated the extent to which this event acted as an attraction for early tourists to Wales.

It is evident that tourists, in the years surrounding the French landing, had a variety of interests that influenced where they chose to travel. The historiography of tourism relating to travel in Wales in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries focuses on the importance of the picturesque as an attraction. This is indeed a key feature of much of the travel writing from this period, however tourists were also keen to experience the emotion and adventure of the sublime, discover the specific culture, history and legendary stories of Wales, as well as engage in the pursuit of more scientific interests such as botany, geology, industry and engineering. In particular, it has been established that tourists placed great importance on visiting sites of famous events - these were largely historical, such as castles or battlefields, but a recent event, as was the French invasion, could equally be considered an attraction for early tourists.

This being said, it seems only a comparatively small number of tourists actually visited Fishguard during the years following the French landing. Despite the interest in the sites connected with the event, the town of Fishguard was little impacted by tourism. Changes that occurred to the structures and population of the town were small and more likely to have been related to the other industries in Fishguard - shipping and fishing - rather than tourism. The minimal engagement of the town with tourism seems to have been limited to the provision of food, accommodation and guides and was conducted in an opportunistic fashion, rather than a calculated interaction with tourism. Therefore although the event of the French landing at Fishguard did to some degree act as an attraction to early tourists, it cannot be said to have been 'brilliantly exploited as a tourist asset' during the years immediately following the event.

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