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A YOUNG RICHARD FENTON.

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RICHARD FENTON: PEMBROKESHIRE HISTORIAN, 1747-1821

By Dillwyn Miles

Richard Fenton, the Pembrokeshire Historian, was the son of Richard and Martha Fenton who probably lived at Rhosson in the parish of St. David's, and he was baptized on 20 February 1747, 'being then a month old'.¹ He was educated at the Cathedral School and, 'at an early age obtained a situation in London in the Custom House'.² He has said little about himself in his writings and one has to depend to a large extent on his grandson, Ferrar Fenton, who wrote a 'Life of Richard Fenton' as an introduction to the second edition of *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire*.³

Fenton was said to have spoken 'of his ancestors as ancient Welsh princes'⁴ and Ferrar Fenton, in corroborating this statement, advances the claim that his grandfather was 'on the male side the descendant, and direct representative of an energetic Baron and Lord of William the Conqueror named Richard, surnamed Le Fentone', and that the family came to Pembrokeshire with Sir William Fenton, Bart., an officer on 'the staff of Oliver Cromwell in 1648'. He also maintained that 'by their Pembrokeshire marriages' the Fentons had 'ancestral connection' with the princes of Glamorgan and the princes of Deheubarth, with Strongbow and with Martin, the conqueror of Cemais, and also with the martyred Bishop of St. David's, Robert Ferrar.⁵ None of these claims can be substantiated. One cannot trace the lineage on the male side beyond Fenton's grandfather, Richard Fenton, who married Diana Lewis, daughter of John Lewis of Nantybugail in the parish of Llanfairnantygof.

John Lewis was the son and heir of John Lewis of Nantybugail,⁶ and his wife Diana, daughter of John Lloyd of Cilgelynen and, through the Lewises of Henllan Owen in the parish of Eglwysrwrw, he gave Fenton a descent on the distaff side from the stock of Gwynfardd Dyfed. Their daughter, Diana, married Richard Fenton who, according to Ferrar Fenton, 'had held office in the courts of Queen Anne',⁷ and their son, Richard Fenton of Rhosson, by his wife Martha, was the father of Richard Fenton the historian.

Lewis was a man of importance in his locality. He was a prosperous farmer, and a magistrate, and he was mayor of Fishguard on no less than

eleven occasions between 1641 and 1675. Fenton maintains that it was to him that Fishguard was 'indebted for having first discovered the advantages of its situation for commerce, as he erected several houses in the lower town commanding the estuary, and particularly one large brick building fitted up with cellars, racks and other requisite conveniences for curing red and white herrings; which were annually exported to the Mediterranean, and gave employment to numbers of the industrious poor'.⁸

Following the death of Diana Fenton 'violent litigation'⁹ in connection with her will, instigated by her elder son, the Reverend Ferrar Fenton, 'greatly crippled the financial resources' of the family and this was considered to be the reason why Richard had been 'withdrawn from the University, and entered in the Civil Service, where one of his relatives held the then important position of Commissioner of the Board of Customs'.

This denial of college education in this manner embittered Fenton and he gave expression to his feelings in writing mock heroic poems in which he satirized his superiors and when he published these in his *Poems* in 1773 he was advised by his kinsman, the Commissioner, to resign rather than face the consequences,¹⁰ according to one story. On the other hand, he was described as 'of the Custom House' in 1179, but it is known that he was 'entered as a student of Law at the Middle Temple' on 24 August 1774.

Ferrar Fenton refers to the Middle Temple as 'the headquarters of the cultured aristocracy and genius of Britain' and states that there his grandfather 'became intimate with Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, Fox, Owen Pughe and ... Samuel Johnson'.¹¹ With the exception of Hoare and Pughe, all these men were members of the Literary Club that Johnson had founded, at the suggestion of Reynolds, and which met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street once a week for supper and conversation from 1764 to 1783. Ferrar Fenton stated that Fenton 'belonged to one of Dr. Sam Johnson's Clubs' and referred to it as 'the one at the Mitre'. The Mitre Tavern, in Mitre Court off Fleet Street, though not 'one of his clubs', was the inn most favoured by Johnson,¹² where he and his company frequently met, and Fenton undoubtedly met them there. In any case, some of them were not of the Middle Temple, and 'charming hare-brained Oliver Goldsmith' had

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died four months before Fenton's admission, and his unusual introduction of Fenton to his future wife must have taken place before 1774.

One fine summer afternoon, the story goes, Fenton and Goldsmith were strolling along a leafy lane in Marylebone and as they went by the gate of a handsome villa, Fenton caught a glimpse of a party of young ladies taking tea on the lawn. He was immediately captivated by the rare beauty of one of them and informed Goldsmith that he would give anything to be introduced to her. 'Nothing easier, my boy', said the Irishman, leading him into the garden. As he approached the elderly gentleman who sat with the young ladies, he doffed his hat and bowed and said: 'I want you to meet my friend, Mr Fenton, the celebrated Welsh poet'. 'I am greatly honoured', responded the old man, speaking with a French accent, and invited the two men to join the party. As they were leaving, Fenton asked Goldsmith who the old gentleman was. 'Nivver saw him in my life', he said, 'but I thought if you wanted to flirt with a pretty girl, you should!'

The old gentleman was described as the Baron Pillet de Moudon, a Swiss aristocrat who had been a Colonel in the French Army and had been decorated for his services, and who had settled in England and become secretary to the Duke of Marlborough.¹³ *The Dictionary of National Biography* refers to him, however, as David Pillet, a Swiss military officer and a personal friend of the second Duke of Marlborough, which is an error as the first Duke's only son died during his father's lifetime and the title devolved upon his daughter, Henrietta.

Eloise, the beautiful one at the party, was Pillet's daughter, and she became Fenton's wife. They had three sons; John, of whom later; Richard Charles, who was born near Machynlleth in 1788 and who became a clergyman and was the father of Ferrar Fenton, and Samuel who was vicar of Fishguard from 1825 to 1852.¹⁴

Sir Joshua Reynolds is said to have painted portraits of Richard and Eloise 'upon ivory, as miniatures', she in the dress she wore when presented at Court and he in Court dress. Richard was also a friend of William Beechey, whom Ferrar Fenton described as 'Court Painter to the Prince of Wales' and added that his grandfather 'was thus brought into intimate acquaintance with His Royal Highness'.¹⁵

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Fenton formed close friendships with some of the leading London Welshmen, and he was a prominent member of both the Gwyneddigion Society and the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, and joint-Librarian of the latter. When William Owen Pughe and Owain Myfyr decided to publish *The Myvyrian Archaiology*¹⁶ they invited Gwallter Mechain, Dafydd Ddu Eryri, Iolo Morganwg and Richard Fenton to assist them. Fenton was chosen because he was a member of the two Societies and as an acknowledged author and poet, but Gwallter Mechain was not enthusiastic about his appointment and wrote to say that he 'always understood that Mr Fenton could not as much as read Welsh'. Owain Myfyr, however, had referred to Fenton as a poet, 'fond of Welsh and of its poetry,' and he was of the opinion that 'as he is a zestful and talented scholar, it will not be long before he masters the language'. To what extent he succeeded in doing so is not clear, but he is credited with a translation of a string of *englynion* by Owain Cyfeiliog, the twelfth century poet-prince of Powys, which would have been no mean achievement. Richard Morris, in writing to Thomas Pennant, in August 1779, referred to 'my friend Fenton, of the Custom House' as 'a good English poet and a great Scholar', and said that he was 'endeavouring to make him a good Welshman: born in Pembrokeshire, he is deficient that way, but comes on bravely'.¹⁷

The only Pembrokeshire connection that Fenton made in London was when he had 'the pleasure of passing a day in the company' of Dr Samuel Johnson, whom he found, contrary to expectation, 'affable, communicative, and not at all dictatorial', and his blind protégé, Anna Williams, daughter of Dr Zachary Williams of Rosemarket, who had brought his inventions to London and had ended up in the Charterhouse. 'Finding that I was a Welshman', stated Fenton, 'she increased her attentions; but when she traced me to Pembrokeshire, she drew her chair closer, took me familiarly by the hand, as if kindered blood tingled at her fingers ends, talked of past times, and dwelt with rapture on Rô's Market.'¹⁸

Fenton was called to the Bar in 1783 and he attended the Welsh circuit for number of years. He took a house near Machynlleth for the convenience of 'his work, although Ferrar Fenton maintained that it was 'to facilitate his studies of Welsh records and literature'¹⁹ and added that 'from this locality during the Vacations of the Circuits, he explored the whole of Wales, and all its great private libraries for information, frequently accompanied by

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his learned friend, the late Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the celebrated Archaeologist and Banker, opening barrows or tumuli for prehistoric burial urns', but this was many years before he was to meet Sir Richard.

In 1792, Fenton went to Dublin²⁰ on professional business, in connection with the prosecution of the insurgents and to examine the cases to be tried for treason. He was so disgusted with the procedures adopted in bringing the rebels to justice that he decided to withdraw from advocacy and confine himself to conveyancing and providing legal advice. He left Machynlleth, and was encouraged by his ageing uncle, Samuel Fenton, to return to Fishguard.

Sam Fenton had sailed, as a naval officer, under Admiral Vaughan of Trecwn, and while they were in the Mediterranean, according to Ferrar Fenton, he had come to the conclusion that 'the Schadyn of the native waters and the Sardines of that sea were the same species of fish, and not "herrings", as popularly called',²¹ and he had also observed the Spanish method of curing the fish. The use of the word *schadyn* is an attempt to indicate the Welsh *sgadan*, 'herrings'. Fishguard was so famous for its herrings that its people were known as *sgadan Abergwaun*.

When he retired from the Navy, Sam Fenton set up a lucrative business preparing and curing the fish in the way the Spaniards did, and exporting them to the Mediterranean countries, and eventually to the Baltic, a trade which is reminiscent of the commerce attributed to John Lewis. At his death, in 1796, Samuel Fenton left his nephew, Richard, the greater part of Lower Town together with his mercantile fleet.

When Fenton returned to Fishguard he took a house at the top of The Slade, but soon decided to build himself a gentleman's residence on the meadow below Carn y Gath. By blasting into the cliff-face, he made a large recess in which to build the house, but found that he had struck glacial till and had to dig to a depth of thirty feet or more to find solid rock upon which to float a firm foundation. It has been suggested that the house was modelled on his wife's family home in the Dordogne. When he laid the foundation stone, he invited 'a *Cymanfa*, or General Meeting of the people of Fishguard and of the neighbouring gentry and clergy, according to the Welsh custom at that time, to consecrate his future home'. The ceremony

closed with a blessing invoked by a local clergyman, whereupon an old woman, Anne Eynon, rushed forward and shouted, in Welsh: 'You have asked a blessing on this stone and house: I place a curse upon them!' She called Fenton a villain and a thief and accused him of building the house upon land promised to her by his uncle Sam whom she had nursed in his old age. 'As God had sent Elijah to curse Ahab for stealing Naboth's vineyard', she bellowed, 'He has sent me to curse Richard Fenton and his family.'

This took Fenton by surprise, as he knew nothing about such a deal, and he promised to right any wrong that had been done to the woman which he did by having a lease prepared whereby he paid her a ground rent of £30 per annum for the meadow, and provided her with a house and garden for her and her daughter for as long as they lived.

He called the new house Plas Glynamel, and Ferrar Fenton opined that Glynamel, 'translated into the English tongue, signifies "The Valley of the Winding brook"', but no Welsh dictionary gives it that meaning, and there is no record of Amel as a personal name. With time, it developed into the more mellifluous 'Glynymel', meaning 'the Vale of Honey'. He planted the grounds with exotic trees and shrubs - Mexican Aloe and Himalayan Bamboo are mentioned as having been grown from seed brought home by his brother-in-law, Colonel Richards of the East India Company. 'Fig trees grew to the stature of oaks', we are told, 'and oranges to that of apple trees.'²²

Being now a man of fortune, Fenton found himself in a position to emulate John Kyrle, 'the Man of Ross', who lived simply on his estate at Ross-on-Wye and devoted his surplus income to charity. Within three years of having inherited his uncle's business, in 1799, when the local people suffered a bread shortage on account of the French wars, he sent a vessel to the Mediterranean, and ordered his ships that were already there, to load grain in Turkey and in Egypt and to bring it back to Fishguard where he distributed their cargoes to the impoverished populace at cost price and free of freight charge.

Fenton's eldest son, John, desired to marry William Owen Pughe's daughter, Elen, rather spontaneously it would seem, for Pughe wrote in

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his diary on New Year's Day 1814: 'J. Fenton came here this morning and asked if he could marry Elen next week'.²³ This did not seem possible to arrange, even with Pughe's ready acquiescence, but the marriage took place three weeks later, at St. Pancras Church. The union did not bring any happiness to the Fenton household, however, as John, probably through Pughe's influence, had become a follower of the fanatic Johanna Southcott, to his father's great distress. Things came to a head one day when Fenton informed his son that he had set aside a plot of land at Glynymel upon which he proposed to build a church for the benefit of his tenants and of the neighbourhood, and John said: 'If you do, Father, I will turn it into a dung-hill to fling the stable muck into!' His father informed him that he would not have the opportunity to do so, and disinherited him in favour of his second son, Richard Charles.

John Fenton was an artist, an accomplished musician and an archaeologist, and he was a member of the Gwyneddigion and Cymmrodorion. He held a position in the War Office, described as Permanent Head of the Foreign Corresponding Bureau but, according to his nephew, Ferrar Fenton, who otherwise held him in high regard, he was 'a man of dissipated life, learnt in the circle of Carlton House and association there with the Prince Regent and his companions'.²⁴ Following his marriage, he lived largely in north Wales but in 1828 he and his wife moved to Fishguard, and William Owen Pughe was able to write to Angharad Llwyd stating 'Fenton is gone to live on his patrimony at Glyn Amel near Aber Gwaen in Dyfed'.²⁵ Richard Charles considered the will to be unjust and, after his parents had died, he sold its reversion to his brother John for a nominal consideration.

In 1831 William Owen Pughe came to visit his daughter and son-in-law, having sailed from Bristol to Fishguard, and stayed for a month, occupying much of his time translating *Iarlles y Ffynnon* (Lady of the Fountain) and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (The Dream of Rhonabwy) before returning to north Wales on a ship that sailed out of Fishguard for Liverpool.²⁶

Despite his inheritance, and having benefited under his mother's will, John Fenton was unable to look after his estate, and he brought it to the verge of ruin. This was interpreted as the fulfilment of the curse laid by the old woman at the consecration ceremony. Glynymel was purchased in 1866 by John Worthington, a wealthy button manufacturer,²⁷ who further developed

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and enhanced the grounds. He kept a zebra and an ostrich,²⁸ as well as horses and hounds, many of the latter being commemorated by inscriptions on stone, such as 'Stop stranger stop, and shed a tear, For Frantic the hound lies buried here'.

Richard Fenton's works comprised a volume of poetry, called *Poems*, published in London in 1773, and re-published in two volumes in 1790 when it was dedicated to John Campbell, later Lord Cawdor; *A Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire* published in 1811 and, in the same year, *A Tour in Quest of Genealogy* appeared as the work of 'A Barrister'. In 1815, also anonymously, he published a humorous book called *Memoirs of an Old Wig*. He translated *Deipnosophistae* (The Banquet of the Learned), a collection of anecdotes and extracts by the Greek grammarian Athenaeus, which was stolen from the library of Sir Richard Colt Hoare, to whom he had sent it for checking, by a valet and sold eventually to Lord Londesborough.²⁹ There were comedies in manuscript that he was said to have written for David Garrick, to whom he had also addressed some of his poems, and there was a great quantity of manuscript material collected for writing a history of Wales, county by county.

Apart from the poems, Fenton's contributions to literature began in 1795 when he published in the *Cambrian Register* 'An Account of an Ancient Game formerly used in Pembrokeshire, South Wales (and not till of late years entirely disused in some parts of it) from a manuscript in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. By one of that Country, who had himself been an Actor in it'.³⁰ This was the account of the banished game of Knappan taken from George Owen's *Description of Penbrokshire*.

In the *Cambrian Register* for 1796 Fenton published 'A History of Pembrokeshire from a MSS of George Owen, Esq., of Henllys, Lord of Kemes, with Additions and Observations by John Lewis, Esq., of Manarnawan, the same that is referred to and cited in Gibson's Edition of Camden, and now first published from the original, by his great grandson, Richard Fenton, Esq.,' and he then proceeded to produce the rest of George Owen's *Description of Penbrokshire*.³¹

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With regard to the 'Additions and Observations' by John Lewis, Fenton states, by way of apology, that 'as the vast mass of supplementary matter collected by my ancestor was never meant to meet the public eye in the state I found it, and as it was very richly interlarded with personal invective and private anecdotes of families which, from respect to their descendants, men of high honour and character, I could not with any degree of delicacy suffer to go abroad, I have been able to make use of but a very small portion of his collection which, if ever I have leisure thoroughly to garble and methodize, may serve not only to elucidate the history of Pembrokeshire in particular, but to enrich the general flock of antiquarian knowledge'.

Regrettably, Fenton did not find the leisure 'to garble and methodize' and we are deprived of a piquant commentary that would have provided us with great insight and a good deal of merriment, judging by the bits that he left in. Fenton was rather carefree in editing the work: he omitted paragraphs, and even a chapter, and added or rearranged words and phrases at will. He misread Giraldus Cambrensis as Gerard Mercator, and Lewis compounded the error by observing: 'Here Mercator, with all deference to that great Cosmographer, talks like an old woman, and with bigotry unworthy of a true philosopher. That Ireland is so blessed as to number venomous creatures amongst its wants, may still require confirmation, and seems a popular error engendered by pious fraud and propagated without examination, unless, as I heard a witty lady observe of that island, it would be overcharging it with the ills of Pandora's box to give it any other noxious animals than its inhabitants of the human species'.³² He further inveighed against the Irish for having introduced 'the pernicious taste for strong distilled liquors, which have made the gout among us more frequent, and bid fair to bring into disuse the only beverage calculated for a British constitution, ale, in all its various forms of brewage, either simple, or incorporated with spice and honey into *Bragawd*'.

Fenton referred to John Lewis as 'the friend of Bishop Gibson and Edward Llwyd'. The extent of the friendship is not known but Lewis was in correspondence with Edward Lhuyd, who had been invited to write additional notes on the antiquities of the counties of Wales for Gibson's new edition of William Camden's *Britannia*, published in 1695. In his account of Pentre Ifan cromlech, Lhuyd states that he had taken it 'out of

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Mr George Owen's Manuscript History communicated to me by the worshipful John Lewis of Maenor Nawen, Esquire'.³³ The manuscript of George Owen's *Description of Penbrokeshire* was in the possession of John Lewis, and it later came into the hands of Richard Fenton.

Fenton made considerable use of George Owen's unpublished manuscripts in his writings, and particularly in his *Historical Tour through Pembrokehire*, and obviously felt rather guilty about it for, after quoting extensively from Owen's 'Second Book' he adds a note saying that 'By some, perhaps, I may be thought to have been too liberal of my quotations from the old Pembrokehire antiquary; yet, I trust, the greater part of my readers who are told that they are the only original and faithful records of the facts they relate to will easily forgive me, and may regret that I have not oftener enriched my coarse work with his curious inlay'. He then goes on to say that he proposed to publish 'all the entire tracts of George Owen, collected from the authentic MSS and not willing that any of his smallest fragments shall be lost, I flatter myself by making my volume the vehicle of such valuable materials which otherwise must have perished, I shall have contributed much more essentially to the stock of antiquarian literature, and the entertainment of my readers, than if I had sacrificed them to anything I could have substituted in their room'.³⁴

A Tour in Quest of Genealogy through several parts of Wales, Somersetshire and Wiltshire in a Series of Letters to a Friend in Dublin, interspersed with a Description of Stourhead and Stonehenge, together with Various Anecdotes, and Curious Fragments from a Manuscript Collection ascribed to Shakespeare consists of letters addressed to Charles O'Brien, Esquire, of Dublin. The author, who took with him, as a companion, one H. Jones, whose main interest was geonics and the collection of rare plants, set out from London on 12 October 1807 and, while they were at Carmarthen, he was tempted 'to enter an auction-room' where he bought a manuscript quarto volume 'importing to be verses and letters that passed between Shakespeare and Anna Hatheway'³⁵ and a tract 'by a Welshman on board Sir Walter Raleigh's ship and written with a pen made out of the quill of an eagle'.³⁶ They sailed from Milford to Minehead, but Fenton was seasick and Jones had to write to O'Brien on his behalf.

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While they were at Milford they met a naval officer who, upon learning that they were going to Minehead, gave Fenton a letter of introduction to his fellow officer, now retired, Captain the Honourable Matthew Fortescue of Holnicote,³⁷ near Porlock, upon whom they called and were so warmly welcomed that they stayed there for eight days. The book was dedicated to Fortescue, who had married, as his second wife, the widow of Sir Thomas Acland of Holnicote, and, as they left, she gave Fenton an introduction to her brother, Sir Richard Colt Hoare at Stourhead.

From Holnicote they proceeded to Bridgewater and then on to Stourton, where they stayed another seven days at the village inn, paying frequent visits to Stourhead, before Fenton, having heard that Sir Richard Colt Hoare proposed to excavate a large tumulus nearby, got the landlord of the inn to make it known to Sir Richard that he would like to be present at the excavation.³⁸ He and Jones were invited, and afterwards Sir Richard gave them 'a polite and pressing invitation to dinner' which, after mentioning the letter of introduction from Fortescue, they accepted. They sat down at half past five when dinner was 'elegantly served', says Fenton, 'in one of the most magnificent rooms I ever sat in ... and warmed by a fire that required a forest to feed it'. He doesn't say much about the meat, but 'the wines were of the first quality, and the dessert excellent ... and the conversation much as might be expected at such a table'. This took place on 14 November 1807, and it was the first time that Fenton met Sir Richard Colt Hoare.³⁹

At one stage, Fenton proposed publishing an enlarged edition of Thomas Pennant's *Tours in Wales*, with illustrations by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, but Pennant, who had at first agreed, withdrew his consent.⁴⁰ His great ambition was to write a comprehensive *History of Wales*, county by county,⁴¹ but he had left it rather late in life to tackle such a task. He had made notes, following journeys through various parts of the Principality and these were found among his papers that were sold after his death by his son, the Rev Samuel Fenton, vicar of Fishguard, in 1858, to Sir Thomas Phillipps of Middle Hill. They were purchased, in 1896, by the Cardiff Free Library where they remain as the Fenton MSS, comprising some sixty volumes. Some of these were published in 1917 by John Fisher, Secretary of the Cambrian Archaeological Association, as compensation to members for 'the unavoidable postponement of the annual excursions on account of

the war'.⁴² Fisher gave the book the title *Tours in Wales* and, to distinguish it from Pennant's book, added (1804-1813) to the title. On some of the journeys Fenton was accompanied by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, whom he visited at his cottage, Fachddeiliog, on the shores of Llyn Tegid.

Fenton embarked on his county histories with *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* which he completed on 20 October 1810. He stated, in his dedication of the book to Sir Richard Hoare, that it had been written at Sir Richard's suggestion, and that its 'chief embellishments' were the result of his 'fine taste in the application of the pencil'. He recalled the numerous journeys they had travelled together and stated that he regarded him as 'the friend of my fortunes and of my life'.⁴³ From this, and other statements, it has been generally accepted that he had been accompanied by Hoare throughout his tour of the county but, in fact, he makes only two references to his presence. He states that, 'in company with my friend Sir Richard Hoare, I took boat from the pier of Tenby to visit Caldey' and he reports that they both set out, on 28 June 1808, from Archdeacon Davies's house at St. David's, 'to explore the neighbourhood of Porthmawr for the station [of Menapia], as well as St. David's Head, and that curious coast abounding with ancient military and druidical works'.

Sir Richard is also credited with having provided the illustrations for the *Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* but a closer inspection of the drawings will show that he was responsible for about a half of them. Apart from an engraving of Fenton taken from a painting by Samuel Woodforde, a friend of Sir Richard, there are thirty illustrations in the book. Eight of these are by John Carter, another friend of Hoare's; six were by John Fenton; the drawing of Slebech Hall was done by Mrs Nathaniel Phillips of Slebech, and that of Stackpole Court by Lady Cawdor, and these plates were inscribed to the ladies concerned at whose expense they were engraved. Other plates are inscribed to their patrons: St. David's Cathedral to the Bishop; Haverfordwest Priory to Lord Kensington; Picton Castle to Lord Milford; Pembroke Castle to Mathew Campbell; Cilgerran Castle to Mrs Hammett, and Pentre Ifan Cromlech to Sir Richard himself, who had paid for the engraving of his own drawing. Sir Richard, therefore, contributed only fourteen of the drawings, including the one of Llech-y-drybedd Cromlech that was used as a frontispiece.

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A second edition of the *Historical Tour* was published in 1903 by Edwin Davies of Brecon, but by this time the plates had been lost, and the illustrations were reproduced by the *Western Mail*. The edition received the patronage of King Edward VII and the Prince of Wales, and it was dedicated to the 14th Earl of Pembroke, though the original dedication to Hoare was noted. A biography of Fenton by his grandson, Ferrar Fenton, is invaluable in that it tells us more than anything else about Fenton but it has to be read with caution. Notes made by Fenton, and by his son, John, in preparation for the new edition, have been included as Addenda. This edition was reproduced in facsimile by the Haverfordwest Library in 1995.

The *Historical Tour* was censured by Thomas Burgess, Bishop of St. David's, in his 'Bishops and benefactors of St. David's vindicated from the misrepresentations of a recent publication'. Fenton's caustic reply to the bishop remains in manuscript, the *DNB* informs us.

The *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, in 1895, stated that it had 'been rather the fashion of late to look on Richard Fenton as an iconoclastic gourmet, who went through the land breaking up barrows and cracking cromlechs', and he himself provided the evidence for this by his descriptions of the excavations carried out on Cerrig y Gof and Freni Fawr and Foel Cwm Cerwyn, where he was joined by a cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen in their carriages, followed by the sumpter cart. 'Never did a more superb pageant grace [the hillside] since the scythed cars of our ancestors ... or some Boadicea and her heroines took the field'.⁴⁴ Maybe the Celtic gods kept an eye on the scene for it came to rain and instead of having their 'cold collation in the clouds', they had to scuttle off and 'transfer the banquet to the little inn at Maenclochog'.

John Fisher considered Fenton 'the most literary of all the Welsh "Tourists", especially of those that went before him', and regarded him as 'a very descriptive writer'. He wrote 'rather a provoking hand - always, it would appear, with quill'. His sentences, however, were 'often much too long and involved and, as found in his handwriting, frequently difficult to make out the drift. As for punctuation, well - he was a lawyer!' ⁴⁵

The *Dictionary of National Biography* states that someone who had known him well referred to him as 'a man of indefatigable industry; of a fine poetical fancy and of a very cheerful disposition; of particularly gentlemanly and fascinating manners, and a person of the best information on almost every subject'.

He died suddenly at Glynymel in November 1821, in his seventy-fifth year, and was buried at Manorowen where his grandson, Ferrar Fenton, placed a memorial on the wall of the church inscribed *Richard Fenton, KC, FAS, Historian of Pembrokeshire*.

Notes

1. Fenton, *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* (2nd ed., Brecknock, 1903), reproduced in facsimile by the Haverfordwest Library, 1995, p.xi.
2. *The Dictionary of National Biography*.
3. R. Fenton, pp. ix-xxxii.
4. *Archaeologica Cambrensis* (1858), p. 380.
5. R. Fenton, p. ix-x.
6. Francis Jones, *Historic Houses of Pembrokeshire and their Families* (Newport, Pembs, 1996), p. 136.
7. R. Fenton, p. xi.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
9. *Ibid.*, p. xi.
10. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
11. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
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