

**PERCEPTIONS OF A CULTURAL BOUNDARY:
LITERARY PRESENTATIONS OF ‘LITTLE ENGLAND
BEYOND WALES’, THE ‘LANDSKER LINE’ AND THE
FLEMISH SETTLEMENT IN PEMBROKESHIRE**

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2002

Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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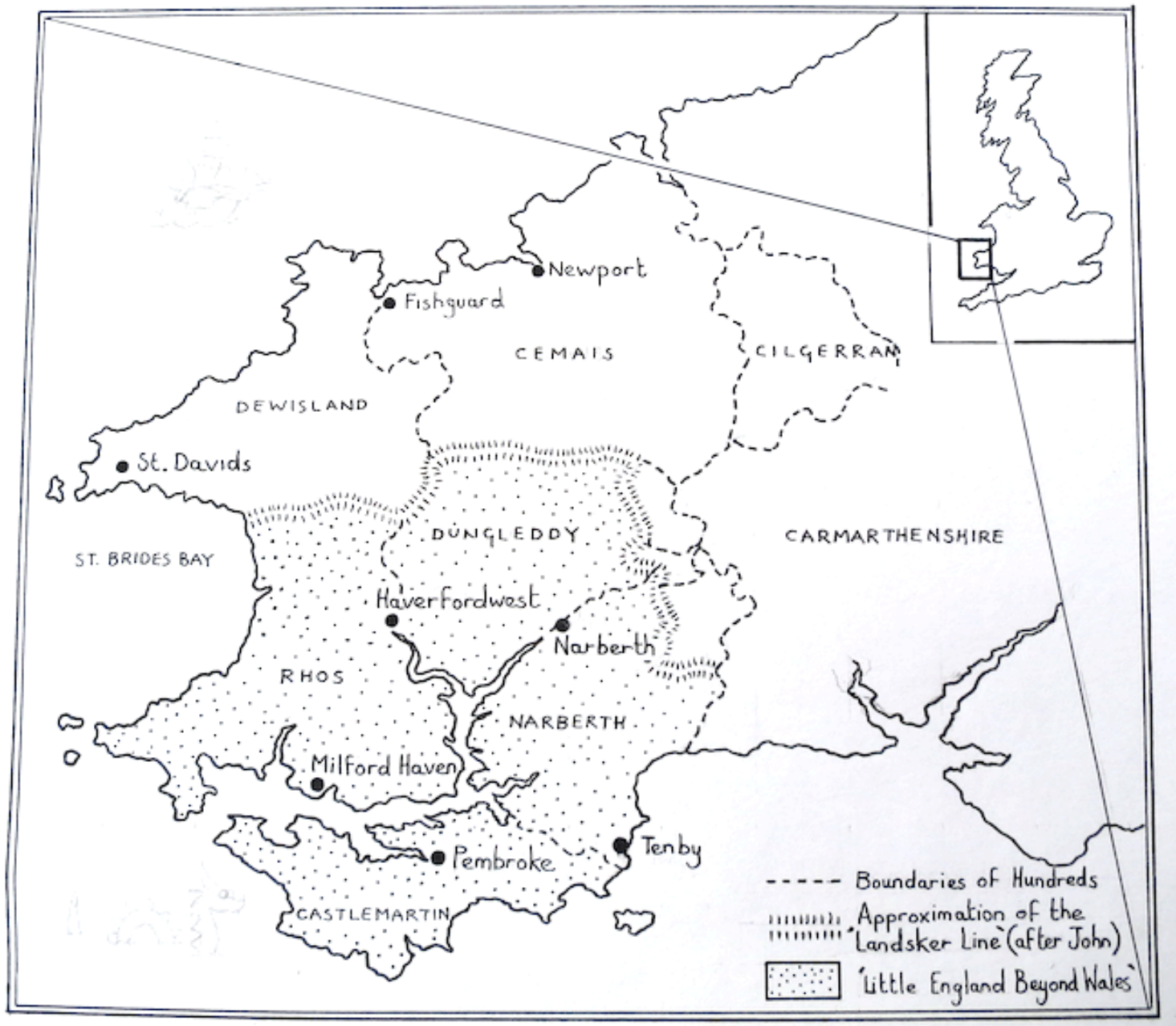
CONTENTS

Abstract	4
Figure 1: Map of Pembrokeshire	5
Introduction	6
ONE: Early Historians and the Rise of Antiquarianism	12
TWO: The Tudor Antiquarian: George Owen of Henllys	
i) The Elizabethan Squire	22
ii) <i>The Description of Pembrokeshire</i>	27
THREE: Antiquarians, Travellers and Tourists: Portrayals of 18th and 19th century Pembrokeshire	
i) The Home Tour and the Historical Account	41
ii) Richard Fenton of Manorowen	51
iii) Edward Laws of Tenby	56
FOUR: Evaluation and Conclusion	62
Bibliography	67

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore the origins, usage and development of the terms ‘Landsker Line’ and ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ in Pembrokeshire, identified in a selection of texts dating from the early medieval period to the beginning of the twentieth century. An examination of these terms necessarily involves the inclusion of material relating to the early medieval Flemish settlement in South Pembrokeshire and its perceived legacy: this is interwoven with the concept of ‘Little England’, particularly in terms of linguistics and the settlement of non-Welsh groups in the region. The continuity of usage and promotion of these terms will be explored, including commonalities or discrepancies between writers, with an emphasis on the highly influential work of George Owen of Henllys and the shaping of a common perception of the history of Pembrokeshire. The effects of the growth of Romanticism and the Home Tour on perceptions of Pembrokeshire and its specific terminology, are also considered in the work of the popular antiquarian Richard Fenton. Three contemporaneous writers, Barber, Malkin and Donovan are also discussed, and their different literary approaches identified, before considering the writings of the late Victorian antiquarian, Edward Laws. Each writer is considered in terms of their historical context and their perceptions of Pembrokeshire, specifically their presentation of ‘Little England Beyond Wales’, the ‘Landsker’ boundary between English and Welsh cultures and the Flemish settlement. Finally, the effect of this emerging, shared sense of history on the complex sense of identity in contemporary Pembrokeshire is briefly evaluated.

Fig. 1: Map of Pembrokeshire



INTRODUCTION

Anyone searching the internet for information on Pembrokeshire, perhaps as a possible holiday destination, will encounter the word ‘Landsker’, probably contained in the phrase ‘Landsker Line’. Additionally, they will find the term ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ and will read that the area was colonised by a large group of Flemish settlers, amongst others, in the medieval ‘history’ of South Pembrokeshire. Tourist information is presented as historical ‘fact’; for example, a representative piece entitled, *Up the Welsh, Down Below*, published on the British Heritage Travel website, is aimed at overseas visitors:

Sooner or later on a trip to Pembrokeshire ... The phrase “Little England Beyond Wales” surely pops up ... (This) is explained by the historic linguistic divide known as the Landsker Line. When the Normans invaded south Pembrokeshire in the 11th century, they built a string of castles to guard their lands, and a frontier developed: Welsh language and culture prevailed to the north, while in the south life became Anglicised, hence Little England. At one time, Flemish immigrants created a sort of buffer zone between the two.¹

This typical content includes all the characteristic elements of Pembrokeshire history as it is perceived in the 21st century, with significant emphasis on the specific terminology of the boundary and the separate cultural and linguistic identities in the region. It is important to note that the word ‘Pembrokeshire’ in this study relates to the contemporary county, containing both North and South Pembrokeshire, rather than as described by the Haverfordwest Alderman, the Rev. J. Phillips, in 1909,

We use the word “Pembrokeshire” here in its proper signification, not including those districts—the north, north-east, and east—which from the

¹ Sian Ellis, ‘Up the Welsh and Down Below’, British Heritage.com (online). Available at: <https://britishheritage.com> <accessed 19 September 2019>

eleventh century to the twentieth century have been continuously occupied by a Welsh- speaking population. In a word by 'Pembrokeshire' in this connection we mean Little England Beyond Wales.²

Stretching from Newgale in the North West to Amroth in the South East of Pembrokeshire, the boundary between English and Welsh speaking communities, now popularly known as the 'Landsker', appears remarkably consistent. In his study of the Pembrokeshire Landsker, Brian John provides a series of maps, using information extracted from George Owen's *Description of Pembrokeshire* through to present day census returns, to illustrate its stability.³ However, remarkably, his findings concluded that, at least in the early 1970s, 91.4% of respondents in his field survey of the Landsker zone, "had never heard the term",⁴ and those that knew of it had acquired this knowledge, "only through local history lectures and extra-mural classes".⁵ This surprising conclusion appears to starkly contrast with the evidence available to the 21st century visitor. Should they visit the region, they will observe the word Landsker in a wide range of contexts, for example, 'Landsker Stores', 'Landsker Childcare', 'Landsker Business Solutions' and so on.

The movement of the term into everyday usage in contemporary Pembrokeshire is significant in terms of identity and a shared perception of the past; however, evidence for its earlier usage remains contradictory. This process of assimilation has not been without its critics, for example, Francis Jones, writing in the journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society in 1988, comments that,

² Phillips, Rev. J., *History of Pembrokeshire* (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p.130.

³ B.S. John, 'The Linguistic Significance of the Pembrokeshire Landsker', *The Pembrokeshire Historian: Journal of the Pembrokeshire Local History Society*, 4: (1972), 7-29. Available at: <https://journals.library.wales/view/1041698/1041935> <accessed 30 August 2019>

⁴ *ibid.*, p.20.

⁵ *ibid.*

The conversion by some modern popular writers of the noun *landscar* into an alleged name for the imaginary line of demarcation, is wholly without historical foundation.⁶

In a linguistic examination of the term, Awbery in her article, ‘The Term Landsker in Pembrokeshire’, discusses the origins and use of the word ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire, indicating that it was used, “... in a fairly general sense to mean a boundary of some kind”.⁷ It is in this sense that the highly influential Tudor antiquarian George Owen uses the word in his seminal work, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, for example, “... they had not liberty to see any fit landskers for those hundreds”.⁸ Awbery proposes that the etymology of the word does not lie in the popularly supposed Scandinavian settlement of the region but points, “... in a rather different direction, towards the West Country of England”.⁹ The earliest example Awbery finds of the use of the term ‘Landsker’ to describe the specific boundary between North and South Pembrokeshire, “... dates from 1939, in the section on Pembrokeshire in *The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain*”.¹⁰ She comments that while the author of this document, Margaret Davies, states that, “This dividing line ... has always been locally known as the ‘*Landsker*,’”¹¹ there appears to be little evidence to support this statement. Awbery concludes that,

The revived and modified usage of this term must go back at least to 1939, possibly earlier, though as yet no earlier example has been found.¹²

⁶ F. Jones, ‘The Pembrokeshire Land Tax Assessments for 1786’, *The Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, 2: (1986-87), 5-18, p.8. Available at:

<https://journals.library.wales/view/1165908/1165970> <accessed 5 September 2019>

⁷ G. M. Awbery, ‘The Term ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire’, *The Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, 4: (1990-91), 32-45, p.36.

⁸ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, edited by Dilwyn Miles (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1994), p.53.

⁹ G. M. Awbery, p.39.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.32.

¹¹ M.F. Davies, *The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain: Pembrokeshire*, in Awbery, ‘The Term ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire’, p.33.

¹² G.M. Awbery, ‘The Term ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire’, p.41.

Despite the evidence of John and Awbery, the term has passed into common usage, indicating a shared cultural perception of the past.

The 20th century has seen the terms ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ and ‘Landsker Line’¹³ established as legitimate in terms of describing Pembrokeshire’s historical past. However, the extent to which this terminology is relevant and/or an accurate representation of the historic division of Pembrokeshire is debateable. Undoubtedly there was, and still is to some extent, a linguistic divide between Welsh and English-speaking communities in Pembrokeshire, clearly documented from the early medieval period to the present day. However, the cultural division described by early antiquaries is now generally considered to paint too extreme a boundary; exaggerated and historically inaccurate.¹⁴

The concept of Little England Beyond Wales, a term with questionable relevance to modern communities in South Pembrokeshire, seems particularly inappropriate and unhelpful in the light of the recent Government Local Plan to develop Welsh language schooling provision in the region.¹⁵ Interestingly, this development has met with opposition in some quarters: ‘Little England’ appears to have been, at least in the 20th century, an integral part of the identity of English speakers in the south of the region. A local resident in the Tenby Observer recently commented that,

In those days, brought up in Tenby, not a word of Welsh was spoken and there was no Welsh taught in schools. There were no bilingual place names, signs and forms. We were very much ‘Little England beyond Wales’ ...¹⁶

¹³ For ease of reference, the phrase ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ will subsequently be referred to as ‘Little England’ in this essay; similarly, ‘Landsker’ will be used for ‘Landsker Line’.

¹⁴ See for example, D. Howells, ‘Introduction’ in *Elizabethan Pembrokeshire: The evidence of George Owen* (Haverfordwest: Pembrokeshire Record Society, 1973), p.x.

¹⁵ Pembrokeshire County Council, ‘Local Development Plan 2, Background Paper Welsh Language, 2019 update’ (online). Available at: <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/local-development-plan> <accessed 14 September 2019>.

¹⁶ Anon., ‘Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society’, *Tenby Observer*, 14 March 2014 (online). Available at: <http://www.tenby-today.co.uk> <accessed 15 January 2020>

Austin's study of Carew Castle, *Little England Beyond Wales: Redefining the myth*, examines the origins of the term and evaluates archaeological evidence to support the gradual early settlement of the area, rather than the commonly accepted view of extensive post-Norman aggressive settlement.¹⁷ In describing the term as a metanarrative, he comments that,

The myth of Little England Beyond Wales appears in many guises in many texts, the vast bulk of which is simple iteration, the great reinforcer of metanarrative.¹⁸

This process of reiteration applies unequivocally to the term, arising in the works of the Tudor antiquarians William Camden and George Owen; promoted and reinforced in a clear line of continuity through their literary heirs, for example, Richard Fenton and Edward Laws. It is therefore essential to consider the work of these writers within their political and historical contexts, in order to understand the reasons for the promotion of the term and its subsequent adoption in a wider cultural context.

The study of the linguistic divide in Pembrokeshire must, necessarily, consider the influx of large groups of Flemish and English settlers to the region, particularly in Rhos and Castlemartin, both in the South West of the county. It is a commonly held assumption, beginning in the late medieval period, that the Flemish community adopted the language of the English settlers, establishing English as the dominant language of South Pembrokeshire and displacing Welsh. The extent of this linguistic and cultural legacy has been a recurrent and absorbing topic for speculation, from George Owen's declaration that, "... there is no show of any remnant of them left ..."¹⁹, to a recent article in which Mary

¹⁷ D. Austin, 'Little England Beyond Wales: Re-defining the Myth', *Landscapes*, 6: (2005), 30-62. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ylan20> <accessed 29 August 2019>

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.31.

¹⁹ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.39.

John comments on their “alien, albeit flimsy, legacy”.²⁰ Despite this a widespread popular belief in the ancestral, cultural and linguistic legacy of the Flemish settlers remains. For example, a recent restoration project on the Norman church of St Jerome in Llangwm, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, investigated the Flemish settlement of the village; this project included taking DNA evidence from a selection of residents in order to attempt to establish Flemish ancestry in the village.²¹

In recent years, modern scholars such as Awbery, Austin and John have challenged the authenticity of the term ‘Landsker’, the concept of ‘Little England Beyond Wales’ and the extent of the Flemish settlement in Pembrokeshire; the three principal supports of the ‘historic identity’ of Pembrokeshire. The apparent contradiction between academic and historical research and the perceived popular view of Pembrokeshire’s most significant ‘historical’ characteristics is significant. This dissertation, therefore, will examine the development of these ideas across the centuries, considering their origins and tracing their growth, in terms of perceptions, through a range of written texts in order to explore their relevance to identity in modern Pembrokeshire.

²⁰ M. John, ‘Where Are The Flemings?’, *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, (2016) (online). Available at: www.pembrokeshirehistoricalsociety.co.uk] <accessed 23 October 2019>

²¹ The Heritage Llangwm Project, ‘Our Story’, heritage.llangwm.org (online). Available at: <http://www.heritagellangwm.org.uk> <accessed 22 March 2020>

ONE: EARLY HISTORIANS AND THE RISE OF ANTIQUANARIANISM

In the medieval period, histories and travel diaries with entries relating specifically to Pembrokeshire were compiled most notably by two writers: Gerald of Wales, born in Manorhiser Castle in Pembrokeshire in 1146 and William of Malmesbury, the 12th century Wiltshire historian and monk, both of whom travelled in Wales and recorded their observations of the region. With a Norman father and Welsh mother, Gerald spent his life in various ecclesiastical roles and, as Royal Clerk to Archbishop Baldwin and the King, wrote extensively of his journeys in Britain and on the continent.²² Similarly, the monastic historian William of Malmesbury, born c.1095, also travelled widely for literary purposes, later composing his important histories, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (1125) and *Historia Novella* (1140).²³ Both writers clearly document the Flemish settlement of Pembrokeshire, however, neither use the term Little England or refer to a Landsker, or any form of boundary or border between the Welsh speaking inhabitants of the North of Pembrokeshire and the English-speaking Flemish, English and Anglo-Norman settlers in the South.

In *The Itinerary of Archbishop Baldwin through Wales* (1188), Gerald writes fondly of Pembrokeshire and his birthplace, making his sympathies clear,

Maenor Pirr is the pleasantest spot in Wales; and the author may be pardoned for having thus extolled his native soil, his genial territory, with a profusion of praise and admiration.²⁴

He further writes of Haverfordwest and the district of Rhos that,

²² Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Giraldus Cambrensis - Welsh Clergyman', Britannica.com (online). Available at: www.britannica.com <accessed 12 December 2020>

²³ R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1987), p.18.

²⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Itinerary of Archbishop Baldwin through Wales*, transcribed by D. Price, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1912), p.85. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1148/> <accessed 23 October 2019>

The inhabitants of this province derived their origin from Flanders and were sent by king Henry I to inhabit these districts; a people brave and robust, ever most hostile to the Welsh.²⁵

Gerald, writing some eighty years after the arrival of the first Flemish settlers in 1113, comments on the friction between the settlers and the native Welsh, who he describes as, "... a people brave and happy"²⁶ and openly criticises the attitude of the King towards Wales,

...if Wales (as it ought to have been) had been dear to its sovereign, and had not so frequently experienced the vindictive resentment and ill-treatment of its governors.²⁷

He attests to the unsettled situation in the area when, writing of the See of St David, he remarks that it was, " continually subject to the hostile attacks of the Flemings on one side, and of the Welsh on the other".²⁸ That Gerald writes of this in the present tense indicates that hostilities were ongoing in Pembrokeshire at that time, implying that the two clearly defined communities shared a hostile relationship; however, it is notable that, even when describing this division, he does not refer to either the Landsker or Little England. Of the arrival of the English and their acquisition of the See of St David's, Gerald is clear and, sounding rather indignant, comments that,

our countrymen, through indolence or poverty, or rather owing to the arrival of the English into the island, and the frequent hostilities committed against them by the Saxons, lost their archiepiscopal honours.²⁹

The nature of the relationship between the English settlers and the Welsh is described as one characterised by frequent and aggressive exchanges, whilst there appear to be no hostilities between the English and the Flemish communities, both settled in Pembrokeshire by the English crown. In a diverse

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.77.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.95.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.96.

travel memoir, Gerald also gives a detailed account of an unusual means of prophecy used by the Flemish community: that of divining the future through the inspection of a ram's shoulder.³⁰ This is the only practice which he records as a specifically Flemish, although he includes numerous other notes on local folk culture, saints, flora and fauna and items of historical interest, he does not differentiate between Flemish, English or Welsh cultural origins.

In contrast to Gerald's sympathetic view of the Welsh, the comments made by the Anglo-Norman cleric William of Malmesbury are representative examples of contemporary twelfth-century views, "regarding the essential quarrelsomeness of the Welsh, a trait which in turn justifies the extension of Norman administration over Wales".³¹ Thus, for example,

The Welsh, perpetually rebelling, were subjugated by the King in repeated expeditions, who, relying on a prudent expedient to quell their tumults, transported thither all the Flemings then resident in England.³²

He further observes that England,

... contained such numbers of these people ... that ... they appeared burdensome to the kingdom. In consequence he [Henry I] settled them, with all their property and connexions, at Ross, a Welsh province, ... both for the purpose of cleansing the kingdom, and repressing the brutal temerity of the enemy.³³

William specifically names 'Ross' (Rhos) as the province given to the Flemings, this is later endorsed by William Camden, author of the highly influential *Britannia*, who writes,

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.82.

³¹ M.A. Faletra, 'Narrating the Matter of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Norman Colonization of Wales', *The Chaucer Review*, 35: (2005), 60-85. p.69. Available at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/8463> <accessed 25 October 2019>

³² William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, transcribed by J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), p.435. Available at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/50778/50778-h/50778-h.htm#CHAP_XIIIB <accessed 30 November 2019>

³³ *ibid.*, p.435.

That part of this Country ... the Britans [D] doe call Ros ... This Tract was inhabited by Flemings out of the Low Countries, who by the permission of King Henry the First were planted heere,³⁴

Whereas Holinshed in his *Chronicles*, describes the Flemish settlement in more general terms,

... they were remooued into a corner by the sea side in Wales, called Penbrokeshire, to the end they might be a defense there to the English against the unquiet Welshmen.³⁵

George Owen, writing some four hundred and fifty years later than William of Malmesbury, and in accord with Holinshed, describes the Flemish settlement as more widespread through South Pembrokeshire; interestingly the area he describes roughly delineates the region named Little England,

... the countries of Roose, Castlemartin, Narberth and most of Daugleddau hundred ... were wholly put to fire and sword by the Normans, Flemings and Englishmen, and utterly expelled the inhabitants thereof and peopled the country themselves.³⁶

Though there is some discrepancy in the accounts relating to the areas of Flemish settlement, the *raison d'être* for their existence is explicitly provided by William and perpetuated in the writings of Holinshed, Camden and Owen. The general consensus being that the Flemish were settled in Pembrokeshire with the express purpose of subjugating the Welsh on behalf of the monarch, and to assist in the Anglo-Norman settlement of Wales. This was particularly apposite when, following the death of Henry I in 1135, the Norman conquerors faced renewed, vigorous assaults by the Welsh. Over subsequent centuries the Welsh threat subsided, a process culminating in the Acts of Union in 1536 and

³⁴ W. Camden, *Britannia*, translated by Philemon Holland (London: George Latham, 1637), p.652. Available at: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> <accessed 30 January 2020>

³⁵ R. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande*, Vol. 3 (London: 1586), p.34. Available at: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> <accessed 30 January 2020>

³⁶ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.42.

1543. Accordingly, attitudes from English writers towards Wales and the Welsh developed into positive interest, rather than rationales for Norman conquest and settlement of the region.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII and faced with the destruction of historical records associated with these institutions, historians attempted to collect whatever material they could find. Ambitious plans were made by John Leland, amongst others, to use these records to provide a county-by-county description of every historical aspect of England, including place names, historical artefacts and material and customary culture. Leland embarked on a series of tours recorded in his *Itineraries* undertaken from 1538-43, visiting Pembrokeshire as part of his *Itinerary in Wales*. His account of Pembrokeshire is sketchy, with no description of the population or contemporary language use, however, it is refreshing to note that Leland,

... drawing on Welsh informants and his own Welsh travels in the immediate aftermath of dissolution and the shiring of lordships after the ‘acts of Union’, showed a positive interest in Welsh history.³⁷

In his text, Leland frequently refers to forests, mountains and rivers as boundaries using their Welsh names; however, the terms Landsker and Little England Beyond Wales are not found. Intriguingly, Leland comments that, “In the extreme part of Penbrokeshire after the old limites is a pore village caullid Angle”.³⁸ Angle is a small village in the far South West of Pembrokeshire and far from the Landsker boundary, therefore this begs the question as to exactly where and what are the ‘old limites’?

³⁷ T. Thornton, ‘Wales in late medieval and early English modern histories: neglect, rediscovery, and their implications’, *Historical Research*, 90: (2017), 683-703, p.699. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs> <accessed 1 December 2019>

³⁸ J. Leland, *The Itinerary in Wales*, edited by L. Toulmin Smith (London: George Bell and Sons, 1906), p.63. Available at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89096307285> <accessed 30 January 2020>

Inspired by Leland's efforts to record the perceived past and the work of Polydore Vergil, author of the influential *Anglica Historia* (1534), antiquarian and historical studies gained in popularity. Works such as Edward Hall's *Chronicle* (1548) and Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587), focussed mostly on the recording of English history, however Holinshed's work also contains interesting information relating to Pembrokeshire. Echoing William of Malmesbury, he records the establishment of the Flemish settlement in the region, noting that the large Flemish group arriving from England, "... consisted not of such onelie as came ouer about that time by reason their countrie was ouerflowne with the sea,"³⁹ but also contained Flemings already settled in England. Noting the political motivations of Henry I, he records that,

... king Henrie deuised to place them in Penbrokeshire ... as also by their helpe to tame the bold and presumptuous fiercenesse of the Welshmen. Which thing in those parties they brought verie well to passe: for after they were setled there, they valiantlie resisted their enimies, and made verie sharpe warres vpon them.⁴⁰

No mention of Little England is found in the text, however the antagonism between communities is again noted. Interestingly, Holinshed makes no distinction between England and Wales in his contents list and tends to include Wales almost as a part of England, with no sense of any geographic distinction or separate national identities. Writing in the period following the Acts of Union in 1536, Holinshed's comments on the legal systems of the Welsh and the English present a change in perspective towards the Welsh,

... king Henrie the eight, who made the Britons or Welshmen equall in all respects vnto the English, and brought to passe that both nations should indifferentlie be gouerned by one law, which in times past were ordred by diuerse, and those far discrepant and disagreeing one from another.⁴¹

³⁹ R. Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*, p.34.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.40.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

Thornton in his article, ‘Wales in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Histories: neglect, rediscovery, and their implications’, discusses in detail the shift from less positive representations of the Welsh in earlier histories, to a deepening English interest into the complex interactions between England and Wales.⁴² He further comments that,

At a time ... when the chronicle tradition was reaching its apogee in the second half of the sixteenth century, progressively to be followed by successor genres such as historically located poems and plays, [and] antiquarian tracts ... Wales made a significant entry into the body of historical knowledge it embodied.⁴³

The first histories relating specifically to Wales and the Welsh were to follow shortly. Humphrey Llwyd’s *Cronica Walliae* and David Powel’s *Historie of Cambria* both written by Welsh authors in 1584, reflected the influence of the English histories and demonstrate the rise in popularity of antiquarian studies. Writing on the rise of antiquarianism, Breisach speculates that this ‘new’ form of writing and historical enquiry may have become so popular because,

... it allowed scholars to satisfy their curiosity about the past ... their quest for demonstrating the proud history of towns, regions and the nation, their demand that history depict all of life.⁴⁴

The initial publication of William Camden’s Latin *Britannia* in 1586 was followed by numerous English translations, notably by Holland in 1610 and Gibson in 1695, the latter containing notes by the important Welsh academic Edward Lhuyd. The work was immensely influential and popular, six editions were published during Camden’s lifetime; Charles comments that, “his

⁴² T. Thornton, ‘Wales in late medieval and early English modern histories: neglect, rediscovery, and their implications’, pp. 683-703.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.697.

⁴⁴ E. Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.187. Available at: <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/2027/heb.04782> <accessed 1 December 2019>

Britannia ... became the pattern for local historians”,⁴⁵ and his influence on Owen and his contemporaries cannot be understated. It is Camden that Owen acknowledges when he writes, “The said county of Pembrokeshire is usually called Little England Beyond Wales and that not unworthily ... Mr Camden calls it *Anglia Transwallia*”.⁴⁶ The phrase 'Little England beyond Wales' as an equivalent translation appears as a printed marginal note beside *Anglia Transwallina*⁴⁷ in the 1586 first edition of *Britannia* and is subsequently adopted into succeeding English translations, including those of Holland and Gibson.⁴⁸ Within a century it had become proverbial, for example, the following dictionary entries from 1678,

- Little *England Beyond Wales*, i.e. Pembrokeshire.
- Little *London beyond Wales*; i.e. *Beaumaris* in the Isle of *Anglesey*: both so called because the inhabitants speak good *English*; indeed in *Pembrokeshire* many of the people can speak no *Welsh*.⁴⁹

Similarly, the Welsh speaking settlement in Patagonia, discussed in a recent BBC article ‘Little Wales beyond Wales’, relates to an area where non-conformists could speak Welsh and freely practice their religion.⁵⁰ From these examples it could be conjectured that this is a form of catchy phrase used to distinguish a linguistically different, culturally separate settlement, set within a wider context. Owen uses the term frequently throughout his writings, and it is significant that he spent some time with Camden in London in November 1594, whilst assiduously pursuing his legal claims relating to the Lordship of Cemais.

⁴⁵ B. G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys: A Welsh Elizabethan* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1973), p.103.

⁴⁶ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.36.

⁴⁷ W. Camden, *Britannia* (London: Radulphum Newbery, 1587), p.373. Available at: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> <accessed 10. November 2019>

⁴⁸ Camden’s spelling in the 1586 edition of *Britannia* is *Transwallina*, subsequent writers, including Owen, used the spelling *Transwallia*.

⁴⁹ J. Ray, *A Collection of English Proverbs* (Cambridge: W. Morden, 1678), p.341. Available at: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> <accessed 2 February 2020>

⁵⁰ N. Prior, ‘Patagonia 150 years on: A ‘little Wales beyond Wales’’, [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-32919137) (online). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-32919137> <accessed 5 February 2020>

Camden cites amongst his sources both Gerald of Wales and William of Malmesbury, whom he quotes liberally when describing the Flemish settlement of Rhos in Pembrokeshire.⁵¹ He comments that the Flemings,

... are distinctly knowne still from the Welsh, both by their speech and manners, and so neere joyned they are in society of the same language with Englishmen, who come nighest of any Nation to the low Dutch Tongue, that this their little Country is tearmed by the Britans Little England beyond Wales”⁵²

By noting the perceived similarity between Dutch and English, Camden attempts to provide a linguistic explanation for the term Little England Beyond Wales, however he also implies that this is a phrase used by the ‘Britans’, i.e. the Welsh, but does not provide evidence for this. As an academic with a keen interest in etymology Camden learnt Welsh, possibly to give him a deeper understanding of Welsh place names and, although he stresses the divisions in Pembrokeshire between the Welsh (‘Britains’) and the English-speaking communities, he refers to places using both their Welsh and English names. He notes, for example, that Haverfordwest is “called by the English men in times past Haverford, and by the Britans Hulphord”,⁵³ similarly, “Fishgard, so called in English of the taking of fish, in British Abergwain”,⁵⁴ seemingly regardless of location, i.e. North or South. This calls into question the nature of the linguistic boundary between the two areas of the shire, providing evidence that Welsh place names continued to be used, additionally suggesting that Welsh-speaking communities co-existed at this time alongside those of English-speaking settlements in Pembrokeshire.

⁵¹ W. Camden, *Britannia*, p. 652. Philemon Holland’s English translation of Camden’s *Britannia* (1637), will be followed for this and all subsequent citations.

⁵² *ibid.*, p.652.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.653.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.654.

The importance of Camden's writings and the transmission of his ideas relating to Pembrokeshire is evidenced in the work of later scholars, for example, that of Abraham Ortelius, who in 1608 notes that,

Those few Flemmings who ... obtained of King Henrie the first, a part of Penbrooke shire in Wales which the Welchmen call Rosse, lying between two rivers ... are they not to this day distinguished from their neighbours round about them by their speech and language? And because their speech doth much resemble the English, is not their countrey commonly called, of those which inhabit neere unto them, Little England Beyond Wales?⁵⁵

Interestingly, Ortelius remarks that this name is given to the area "by those which inhabit neere unto them", implying that this is a term used by the Welsh for the area settled by the Flemings. Significantly, in his Introduction to *The British Isles*, he describes Camden as, "the onely light of our histories, in that his thrise renowned Britannia, evidently demonstrated".⁵⁶ The historical blueprint for Pembrokeshire has been created and it is noteworthy that subsequent travellers and historians in their limited accounts of Pembrokeshire, unfailingly refer to the region as Little England Beyond Wales, additionally documenting the Flemish settlement, though not the Landsker. These 'facts' are now fixed as distinct regional characteristics, almost stock phrases, continually used to describe the history of Pembrokeshire.

Whilst there may be some accuracy in these historical accounts, Camden's depiction of distinctly separate communities appears to be unquestioningly accepted by later writers, disallowing any changes in the cultural and linguistic composition of these communities over the passage of time. It remained for a historian with local knowledge to add authenticity and eye-witness accounts to Camden's historical portrayal of Pembrokeshire.

⁵⁵ Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (London: John Norton, 1606), p. 332. Available at: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com> <accessed 10 February 2020>.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.10.

TWO: THE TUDOR ANTIQUARIAN: GEORGE OWEN OF HENLLYS

i) The Elizabethan Squire

Born at Henllys, Pembrokeshire, in around 1552, George Owen and his multi-disciplined, eclectic, antiquarian writings sit comfortably in the early-modern period and he is very much a man of his time, reflecting the new-found Elizabethan zeitgeist relating to the pursuit and recording of ‘history’. His antiquarian approach differed from established historical writing of the period as “... historians influenced by humanist ideals told of individuals and their actions in narratives, [whilst] antiquarians studied the remains of collective life.”⁵⁷ Owen’s multi-faceted account documents Pembrokeshire life in great detail and, as the earliest writer to do this in any depth, his contribution to modern perceptions of historical Pembrokeshire are important and far-reaching. *The Description of Pembrokeshire* was completed in manuscript form in 1603 and provides a detailed examination of the region, containing chapters ranging from the lineage of the Lords of Pembrokeshire to the flora and fauna, geology, historical artefacts and agricultural practices of the region, as well as a description of the population of Pembrokeshire, their ancestry, ethnicity and languages. This eclectic mix is not unusual, and Owen is following a relatively well trodden literary and antiquarian path.

Professor Charles suggests diverse sources for Owen’s work, ranging from Gerald of Wales, Powel, Pliny and John Bale.⁵⁸ However, in terms of a template for his writings, it would seem that *The Survey of Cornwall* (1602) by Richard Carew, was of particular interest to Owen; Charles suggests that, “No one who reads the two works side by side can but be impressed by a similarity in their design and approach.”⁵⁹ Carew’s book contains observations on mining,

⁵⁷ E. Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, p.174.

⁵⁸ B.G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p.172.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.176.

livestock, farming practices, sea and fresh fish, building materials, the nature of the Cornish people, a list of manors held by the Duchy of Cornwall and an interesting description of hurling, reminiscent of Owen's famous account of knappan. Carew also demonstrates the linguistic and naming conventions of the Cornish and their links to the Welsh commenting that, "where the Saxons have not intruded their newer usances, they partake in some sort with their kinsmen the Welsh,"⁶⁰ and that the Cornish language, "is more easie to bee pronounced, and not so unpleasing in sound, with throat letters, as the Welsh".⁶¹ It is significant that Carew acknowledges William Camden whom he refers to as, "my particular kind friend, and generally well-deserving Countreyman M. Camden,"⁶² demonstrating a shared continuity of source with Owen and later eighteenth and nineteenth century writers.

Owen's seminal work *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, portrays a clearly divided region, segregated along linguistic, ethnic, cultural and legal lines. However, Howells in his reproduction of selected parts of *The Description* comments that, "... it is very doubtful whether the division between the two was as clear-cut as George Owen made it appear to be".⁶³ As a Tudor gentleman, claiming mixed Norman and Welsh ancestry, his motivations in portraying Pembrokeshire in this manner, rather than as a complex cultural and ethnic mix, are unclear. Perhaps, therefore, it is worth considering whether Owen had particular reasons for presenting such a division and promoting the term Little England. In his introduction to *The Description*, Miles remarks of Owen that,

He belonged to that school of scholar gentlemen which grew out of the general Elizabethan antiquarian movement. These country squires ...

⁶⁰ R. Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall*, edited by H.C. Esq. (Penzance: E. Law and J. Hewett, 1769), p.56. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/9878/pg9878-images.html> <accessed 20 November 2019>

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.56.

⁶² *ibid.*, p.58.

⁶³ D. Howells, 'Introduction' in *Elizabethan Pembrokeshire: The evidence of George Owen* (Haverfordwest: Pembrokeshire Record Society, 1973), p.x.

were attracted to the study of their pedigrees and the devolution of their own property.⁶⁴

In 1543, George Owen's father, William Owen, purchased the Lordship of Cemais from the Audley family who reputedly neglected the estate and failed to extract and collect the dues they were entitled to from their tenants.⁶⁵ The Owen family made assiduous, and futile, efforts to assert their rights, meeting with fierce resistance from tenants and the local gentry who considered the family to be "pretentious upstarts".⁶⁶ This provided Owen with the motivation to prove that he was directly descended from Sir Nicholas Martin, the Norman lord of Cemais as well as the previous incumbent Welsh princes, giving him a joint hereditary claim to the title and accompanying feudal rights. Interestingly, Owen firmly keeps a foot in both Anglo-Norman and Welsh camps by claiming dual descent from both Norman knights and Welsh princes; this is obviously expedient for him as the Lord of a Welsh-speaking area within North Pembrokeshire.

Miles comments that the evidence for his claim, "was communicated to him by William Camden in 1594 and published, later, in the 1607 edition of *Britannia*."⁶⁷ In this, Camden explicitly references George Owen, writing that Owen's father,

... derived his pedigree from a daughter of Sir Nicholas Martin Knight, after long suit in law for his right, in the end obtained it, and left it to his sonne George.⁶⁸

Professor Charles writes that although Owen had a considerable reputation as a genealogist, his claim to be directly descended from the Martin lords, "looks very much like a piece of fabrication ... to suggest that he had some hereditary

⁶⁴ B. G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p.107.

⁶⁵ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, pp. 236-7.

⁶⁶ D. Miles, 'Introduction' in *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. xxvii.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.xxx.

⁶⁸ W. Camden, *Britannia*, p.654.

right to the barony of Cemais.”⁶⁹ Miles further notes that though his declared objective was to record his extensive and highly detailed observations of Pembrokeshire, “... as a Tudor gentleman who had inherited a lordship with feudal rights, he had other motives besides.”⁷⁰ By writing an interesting and multi-faceted account of Pembrokeshire which would appeal to many, George Owen acquired an audience for his research and his legal claims, unsurprisingly a significant section of the first chapters of *The Description* relate to these matters.

Owen was very concerned about the effects of the Act of Union upon Wales and the redivision of Pembrokeshire’s ancient boundaries with Carmarthenshire. In 1594, whilst meeting with Camden in London, he wrote *A Treatise of Lordshipps Marchers in Wales*, in which he examined the history and nature of the marcher lordships, specifically Pembrokeshire, including this in the manuscript of *The Description*. Owen claimed that he was descended from a marcher lord and, according to Charles, “he was jealous of the attenuated privileges which the Statute of 1536 reserved to these lords, for he counted himself one of them”.⁷¹ Despite Owen’s praise for Tudor government and jurisdiction, it could be proposed that Owen emphasized the separateness of the communities in Pembrokeshire because it presented the area clearly as a ‘marcher’, thereby entitling the Lord of Cemais to exceptional rights and accentuated authority over his earldom. Similarly, Austin’s assertion that,

... it was under the shifting circumstances of the Welsh gentry’s ambiguous engagement with the English Crown that the cultural myth of Little England Beyond Wales crystallised,⁷²

⁶⁹ B.G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p.3.

⁷⁰ Miles, ‘Introduction’, in *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.i.

⁷¹ B. G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p.133.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.38.

provides some political context for the writings of George Owen, representing a duality of approach and loyalties, evident in *The Description* and in the person of George Owen himself.

The upward movement of the Owens, through land purchase, education, advantageous marriages and ambitious legal careers is representative of the rise of sixteenth century Tudor gentry throughout England and Wales. In a discussion on the use of the term ‘gentry’ by historians, Coss uses the word “territoriality” as an encapsulation of the characteristics of the gentry, he writes that, “... This territoriality has four essential components: collective identity, status gradation, local public office and authority over the populace”,⁷³ all elements appear to be apposite to the Owen family. The growth of the gentry class, engendered by the redistribution of land and property following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, was accompanied by a surge in interest in local history as new landowners attempted to add genealogical legitimacy to their newly acquired privileges. Owen was a lawyer, a farmer, a landlord and a holder of public offices and his work not only reflects his life-long ambitions to record his ‘miniature world’ in great detail, but his interest in antiquarian matters and his great affection for the area. However, perhaps on closer inspection, *The Description* also evidences his attempts to establish his rights as the Lord of Cemais, based on his extensive genealogical research.

Owen’s life as a young man was colourful: it was well-known that he had a mistress established on his estate (whom he later married), had ten illegitimate children with her and was also involved in a long running feud with the Perrott family, resulting in bloodshed and running battles in Haverfordwest.⁷⁴ Conversely, he was also, “industrious, thrifty and far-sighted”,⁷⁵ and was motivated to ensure the good standing of the Owen family for future

⁷³ P.R. Coss, ‘The Formation of the English Gentry’, *Past & Present*, 147: (1995), 38–64. p.48. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/651039 <accessed 22 November 2019>

⁷⁴ B.G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p.43.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.33.

generations. However, it is his literary legacy, in terms of his recording of Tudor Pembrokeshire in *The Description*, and its contribution to a shared history of the region, which remains highly significant and therefore a closer, critical examination of his text is required.

ii) *The Description of Pembrokeshire*

Owen had originally planned to write two volumes of *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, the second remained unfinished in fragment form, however the initial work was completed and entitled, *The First Booke of the description of Penbrokeshire in genrall*, though it remained unpublished in his lifetime.⁷⁶ Two versions of the scribed manuscript exist, with the earlier version, dated 1603. Dilwyn Miles in his edition of *The Description* traces the ownership of the manuscript and notes that it, “came into the possession of John Lewis of Manorowen ... who bequeathed it to his descendant, Richard Fenton, the historian”.⁷⁷ Fenton published a fragment of this, complete with John Lewis’ comprehensive notes on the manuscript, in *The Cambrian Register* in 1795 with the remainder appearing in the same publication in 1796. Following the death of Richard Fenton, the manuscript became the property of his son, the Rev. Samuel Fenton and ultimately has become the property of the National Library of Wales, where it remains.⁷⁸ The second and slightly later manuscript was owned by the Earl of Oxford, who acquired it in 1738; it was eventually placed in the British Museum in 1753.

The Description of Pembrokeshire is a comprehensive survey of Pembrokeshire life, following a pattern laid down by earlier antiquarians. However, with an area as diverse as Pembrokeshire and its history of conquest and settlement, it is not surprising that Owen devotes at least three chapters to

⁷⁶ D. Miles, ‘Introduction’, in *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. xli.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. xliii.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.xlv.

the divisions and cultural mix within the region. He begins by retelling the familiar account of Flemish settlement, writing that, “Mr Camden notes...”,⁷⁹ no acknowledgement is given to either William of Malmesbury or Gerald of Wales for this information, extracted by Camden from these earlier sources. Owen, however, differs from Camden when he adds additional information to his account relating to the location and activities of the Flemish settlers. He is perhaps informed by local knowledge when he writes that they,

... were sent thither to Gerald, steward of Pembroke, who gave them habitations and dwellings in Roose and about Pembroke and Tenby and other places in the country adjoining, who were for the safeguard of themselves forced to begin to build the towns of Tenby, Pembroke and Haverfordwest...⁸⁰

In another clear departure from Camden, Owen also documents the apparent cultural and linguistic disappearance of the Flemish settlers in the region,

... whereas some write that the Flemings are yet there and to be known and differing from others by their speech and manners, therein they are mistaken. For if the Flemings were placed there, as we must think and credit the histories, yet certain it is that there is now no sign thereof, but both the Flemish and French speech altogether worn away and only English, such as is spoken in other parts of England, is commonly used there, and no other language.⁸¹

The ‘some’ referred to here, includes William Camden who remarks that the Flemings, “...are distinctly knowne still from the Welsh, both by their speech and manners”.⁸² Perhaps this difference of opinion reveals Camden’s lack of in-depth knowledge of Pembrokeshire and Owen’s first-hand, local observations. However, in a typically contradictory fashion, when Owen returns to the theme of the legacy of the Flemings in Chapter Five, he writes

⁷⁹ George Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.17.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.18.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.19.

⁸² W. Camden, *Britannia*, p.652.

that, "... these meaner sort of people, although they have lost their language, are the remnant and offspring of these Flemings".⁸³

Discussing the effect of Flemish settlement on the ethnicity of the local population, specifically those of a lower social status, Owen comments that he is "... persuaded that divers of the common people, swains and labourers of the county, are descended of those Flemings".⁸⁴ Owen detects further traces of Flemish ancestry in the industrious and honest nature of the 'common people', which can be seen, in his opinion at least,

... by their serious and careful applying of their labours ... in not meddling with other men's affairs, and for true and plain dealing, they show themselves to be the heirs of these ancient Flemings.⁸⁵

It appears from this remark that Owen considered there was, in fact, some 'remnant' of the Flemings remaining in the area, if only by reputation. It is interesting to speculate whether he was 'persuaded' of the legitimacy of Flemish descent by his own observations, by information contained in works by other writers or by the locals.

This praiseworthy description of the Flemish settlers, very different from that contained in the portrayals of earlier writers, illustrates the development of a romanticised view of Flemish influence in the region; this gathered popularity in successive centuries up to the early twentieth century and beyond, and still remains a popular perception in contemporary Pembrokeshire. However, in a final paragraph, which seems to contradict his earlier glowing praise for the Flemings, Owen goes on to comment on, "the unseemliness of the common people of the country"⁸⁶, noting that,

... of the common people of this county, the Welshmen whom the rest call the mountain men, are found to be the more personable.⁸⁷

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.47.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.39.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.47.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.48.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

These rather confusing sentences are typical of Owen's text which contains many contradictions and, at times, reads rather like a 'stream of consciousness' memoir: though it is important to note that the work appears in its unpublished, unedited form, which may account for the rather eccentric presentation of information. Presumably, in these sentences, Owen is writing of the Welsh - speaking inhabitants of the Preseli Hills, though in terms of Welsh settlement, Howells notes that, "in the early fourteenth centuries almost the whole area from Amroth to Canaston was occupied by Welshmen".⁸⁸ It would seem that 'the common people' are a mix of Flemish and English settlers, interspersed with the indigenous Welsh, which renders the picture of an ethnically dualistic Pembrokeshire as unreliable, social divisions appearing potentially more accurately marked along lines of social class and linguistics.

Though Owen writes comprehensively of the existence of three predominant ethnic groups, English, Welsh and Flemish, in the area, he also comments on a fourth; the substantial Irish settlements in 'Roose' (Rhos) and Castlemartin, both areas in Little England,

... In every village you shall find the third, fourth or fifth householder an Irishman, and now of late they swarm more than in times past ... And if it so continue for the time to come, in a short time they are likely to match the other inhabitants for number.⁸⁹

Owen remarks that the Irish speak English, "yet in such sort as that all men may discern them to be that country's people",⁹⁰ and comments on their lack of manners or "rudeness", though he points out that, to their credit, their homebrewed *aquavitie* is "exceeding good".⁹¹ On the growth of the Irish population in the region, he writes that,

⁸⁸ D. Howells, 'Introduction', in *Elizabethan Pembrokeshire*, p.ix.

⁸⁹ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.43.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.43.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.44.

They are so increased that there are some whole parishes inhabited by the Irish, having not one English or Welsh but the parson of the parish.⁹²

Miles in his notes on *The Description* remarks that this widespread settlement is confirmed by a letter, written in 1523, to the Lord Chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, complaining that, “a great abundance of Irishmen ... to the number of twenty thousand persons and above” had arrived in Pembrokeshire, specifically Haverfordwest, and Pembroke,

... and to such an extent in Tenby that the town was ‘almost clean Irish’, including the mayor and burgesses who violently and riotously disobeyed ‘the king’s laws, his peace, crown and dignity.’⁹³

Owen’s Chapter Four, reflects the cultural mix he observed in 16th century Pembrokeshire in its title,

That the county is now inhabited by three several nations, as Welshmen, the remnant of the Ancient Britons and first inhabitants of the county; Englishmen brought thither at the conquest thereof, and by Irishmen which do daily ferry over thither out of Ireland ...⁹⁴

By adding Irish settlement to the cultural mix of the region, Camden’s rather simplistic dualistic division of Pembrokeshire and Little England into English, Flemish and Welsh groups, appears more complex than suggested, calling into question the legitimacy of the term Little England Beyond Wales.

It is in Chapter Four that Owen provides a clear description of the divisions in the shire; his opening remarks note the familiar separation of Pembrokeshire into two distinct areas,

The shire is taken to be divided into two parts, that is to the Englishry and the Welshry ... The upper part of the shire, which I call the Welshry, is inhabited with Welshmen, the first known owners of the county and are

⁹² *ibid.*, p.43.

⁹³ D. Miles, ‘Notes on the Text’ in *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.244.

⁹⁴ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.41.

such as were never removed by any conquest or stranger that won the county.⁹⁵

In a later chapter, Owen describes this in more detail, noting the geographical division of the parishes and portraying not only a clear split between English and Welsh areas, but additionally a distinctly marcher area,

...about seventy-four parishes are inhabited by the Englishmen, and sixty-four parishes mere Welsh, and the rest, being about six, speak both languages, being as it were the marches between both those nations.⁹⁶

He lists Cemais, Cilgerran, Dewisland and part of Narberth as within the ‘Welshry’, also taking the opportunity to reaffirm the hereditary rights of the Lordship of Cemais. Owen ascribes the use of the Welsh language in this district to the survival of the “ancient men of Cemais” who, “retain and keep with their inheritance their ancient language, the Welsh”.⁹⁷ Additionally, he states that Dewisland, belonging to the Bishops of St David’s, retained its Welsh speaking status due to its sacred nature, but adds that he does not know why Welsh was retained in Cilgerran.⁹⁸ Perhaps here there is evidence of Owen’s inability to complete his ambitious project; that of compiling a comprehensive history of all areas of Pembrokeshire. He writes in great detail of his home in Cemais, however he does not have the in-depth knowledge of other areas to be able to write such an accurate account of these districts, instead he generalises or simply admits that he does not know the information.

A clear link between trade and language in Welsh and English-speaking areas is recorded by Owen when he documents the prosperous and active trade between Pembrokeshire, England (particularly the South West), Ireland and the continent. He records that,

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.41.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.51.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.42.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

... the lower part of the shire vend and sell their wool to Bristol men, Barnstaple and Somerset... The upper parts, as Cemais and Cilgerran, ... is bought by North Wales men ... which they sell to Shrewsbury men.⁹⁹

This appears to be clear evidence of the relevance of language in Pembrokeshire with English and Welsh-speakers selling to their linguistic counterparts. The extent of these linguistic interactions, specifically with the South West of England, may be significant, particularly as Awbery suggests that the dialect word 'landsker' originates from that region.¹⁰⁰ In *The Description*, butter and cheese is sold, "...sometimes to Ireland for provision of the Queen's garrison there",¹⁰¹ while oysters are shipped to Bristol, and the hundreds of Narberth and Rhos sell, "...sea-coal ... to Ireland and France".¹⁰² It would be apposite to suggest that the English language may have been used as a *lingua franca* for trading activities; a language understood by many in Wales, England, Ireland and on the continent. Perhaps, therefore, the linguistic division in Pembrokeshire is partly a result of economic expediency; advantageous to the forming and development of trading partnerships and the generation of wealth. Owen may have misunderstood the nature of the linguistic divide, seeing it in terms of ethnicity rather than as a practical business solution or an expedient way of uniting disparate linguistic groups, something which may also have been overlooked by later antiquarians and tourists.

Owen goes on to contrast the linguistic and cultural legacy of the Norman, Flemish and English settlers in the English-speaking areas of Rhos, Castlemartin, Narberth and Daugleddau, to that of their Welsh-speaking counterparts in Dewisland, Cemais and Kilgerran, he comments that their,

... posterity remain(s) there to this day, as may appear by their names, manners and language, speaking altogether the English, and differing in manners, diet, buildings, and tilling of the land from the Welshmen.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁰⁰ G. M. Awbery, 'The Term 'Landsker' in Pembrokeshire', p.39.

¹⁰¹ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.60.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.42.

That these areas were extensively settled by these groups has been substantially documented by a succession of medieval and early modern historians and writers. However, the divide between Welsh and English communities is portrayed as unusually marked by Owen, who writes that,

... though this be now well near 500 years past, yet do these two nations keep each from dealings with the other, as mere strangers, so that the meaner sort of people will not, or do not usually, join together in marriage, although they be in one hundred and sometimes in the same parish.¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that Owen adds that inter-marriage between the English and the Welsh was not practiced by “the meaner sort of people”. He himself claimed descent from both Welsh princes and Anglo/Norman aristocracy, and there is clear evidence of higher status intermarriage between these two groups, for example in the lineage of Gerald of Wales.¹⁰⁵

Further clearly defined differences between the two cultures are presented when he writes that the two communities do not engage in,

... commerce nor buy but in open fairs, so that you shall find in one parish a pathway parting the Welsh and the English, and the one side speak all English, the other all Welsh, and differing in tilling and in measuring of their land, and divers other matters.¹⁰⁶

Whether Owen felt this represented an accurate picture of Pembrokeshire is debateable and whether this was an actuality is also a matter for consideration. His early literary predecessors did not record such a clear-cut division in Pembrokeshire, rather they focussed on Flemish settlement and the use of the English language in the region. It could be suggested that these writers, as travellers and tourists, did not have the first-hand experience of the region that Owen had, but it is remarkable that the Pembrokeshire born Gerald does not

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁰⁵ R. Turvey, *Pembrokeshire: The Concise History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p.38.

¹⁰⁶ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, pp. 42-3.

mention this demarcation or, in fact, any boundary line, as it would surely have been a notable feature. Owen's portrayal of such a sharp division will be examined later in this study, particularly in the writings of the early 19th century historian Benjamin Malkin, who proposed that claims such as these were both exaggerated and illogical.¹⁰⁷ A century later, an interesting early 20th century account of the division between English and Welsh speaking communities in Pembrokeshire can be found in the account of the local historian, the Rev. James Phillips, who observes that,

It is a standing joke that in one village the boundary between the Welsh and English languages is in the middle of the village street... The writer need hardly say that he has not been able to identify this village, although the story may be accepted as a poetical exaggeration of the narrowness and permanence of the linguistic frontier.¹⁰⁸

Though Owen is not mentioned by name, it is clear that his portrayal of the divide has passed into commonly accepted folklore, perhaps rather like an 'urban myth'.

It is also in Chapter Four, that Owen's most quoted, and perhaps misquoted, passage occurs,

Now will I speak of the second division thereof, as it now stands divided between the Englishmen and the Welshmen of that shire ... that to this day they wonder at a Welshman coming among them, the one neighbour saying to the other: 'Look there goes a Welshman'.¹⁰⁹

A closer reading of Owen's text reveals that in this extract Owen is writing specifically about 'the second division thereof' i.e. the cantref of Arberth, which had formerly contained Welsh-speaking commotes lost to Pembrokeshire and added to Carmarthenshire as part of the abolition of the Marcher lordships in

¹⁰⁷ B. H. Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1804).

¹⁰⁸ Rev. J. Phillips, *The History of Pembrokeshire*, p.134.

¹⁰⁹ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. 50.

1536.¹¹⁰ It is entirely possible that later writers (and readers) might assume that Owen is portraying the division between North and South Pembrokeshire as a whole, rather than a relatively small area bordering a Welsh-speaking county. In this extract, Owen is also commenting on the reorganisation of county boundaries, the loss of commotes from his own Lordship of Cemais and his disapproval of the new arrangements. It is in his description of this rearrangement that Owen uses the word ‘landsker’ to describe boundaries in their original sense, as noted by Awbery.¹¹¹ Of the Commissioners, for example, he notes that, “Neither did they follow any straight way, path, river or marks to make the hundreds of good form, but took the landskers as they found them ...”¹¹². As the locally born Lord of Cemais engaged in writing a comprehensive portrait of Pembrokeshire, it is significant that the capitalised term Landsker, used as the name of the linguistic boundary between North and South Pembrokeshire, does not form part of his observations.

Though Owen does not use the term Landsker, he does repeatedly refer to Little England Beyond Wales, devoting Chapter Two to , “...why it (Pembrokeshire) is called Little England beyond Wales”.¹¹³ By presenting this as a statement of fact, Owen implicitly encourages the reader to assume that this is an established truth. In another curiously jumbled passage, Owen refers to Gerald of Wales when he writes,

There hence have also sprung up divers famous clerks whose learned works are yet famous to the world. It is called, ‘Little England Beyond Wales’.¹¹⁴

The linking of these two sentences seems almost clumsy as Gerald does not use this term in his work; however, there is an implication that this idea is

¹¹⁰ R. Turvey, *Pembrokeshire The Concise History*, p.61.

¹¹¹ G. Awbery, ‘The Term ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire’, p. 34.

¹¹² G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. 53.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p.10.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.14.

associated with Gerald, an acknowledged historical authority. It is towards the end of Chapter Four that Owen lays out his reasoning for the name Little England Beyond Wales,

The said county of Pembrokeshire is usually called Little England Beyond Wales and that not unworthily ... Mr Camden calls it Anglia Transwallia: the reasons why it took that name may well be conjectured, for that the most part of the county speaks English, and in it no use of the Welsh.¹¹⁵

Interestingly, Owen uses the word ‘conjecture’, implying that this is at best an opinion formed on the available information or simply a ‘best guess’, the guess being that the term has emerged due to the use of English in the area; neither does he comment on exactly who ‘usually’ uses this term. Additionally, Owen’s earlier contradiction of Camden’s comments on the Flemish settlement perhaps indicates a sense of a proprietorial interest in Pembrokeshire on Owen’s part. He indirectly implies, perhaps with some justification, that he can provide the most authoritative account because he is a native of Pembrokeshire, from a long-established local family possessing alleged joint Welsh and Norman ancestry.

Conjecturing on the potential reasons for the term, “... I think good to show my opinion why the same was so called”,¹¹⁶ Owen presents some interesting and varied evidence,

The names of the people are mere English, each family following the English fashion in surnames. Their buildings are English-like, in townreds and villages, but not in several and lone houses ... Their diet is as the English people use, as the common food is beef, mutton, pig, goose, lamb, veal and kid ... The names of the county places are altogether English as Wiston, Picton, Haroldston ¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

If this list is critically examined it seems that Owen has painted a picture with a large brush, omitting significant detail relating to the complex cultural mix of Pembrokeshire. For example, the towns of Haverfordwest, Tenby and Pembroke were established by the Anglo-Norman lords during the early-medieval period of settlement; Owen had previously commented that these towns were established by the Flemish settlers, primarily for defensive reasons, and so it is unsurprising that they not built in a Welsh style. Additionally, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the population, approximately 90 per cent, were peasants, who lived in rural small holdings, “several and lone houses”, rather than towns.¹¹⁸

Owen’s comments on the diet of the population are similarly generalised. The English, Norman and Flemish settlers had colonised the prime agricultural areas of Pembrokeshire as well as securing the ports of Milford Haven and Pembroke. Their diet would have been potentially rich, but, according to Owen, this was standard fare, “... which usually the poorest husbandman does daily feed on”.¹¹⁹ However, even though Pembrokeshire was rich in terms of produce, in 1794 it was reported to the Board of Agriculture that, “... the labouring poor live almost entirely upon bread and cheese, milk and vegetables, except when herrings are plentiful on the coast”.¹²⁰ George Owen himself commented on only giving meat to his farmworkers “...against certain feasts of the year”.¹²¹ It is difficult to accept the veracity of Owen’s portrayal of Little England Beyond Wales and its sharp divisions, when evidence relating to these fundamental aspects of life in early modern Pembrokeshire, appears to contradict the account found in *The Description*.

¹¹⁸ B. Howells, ‘Society, 1536-1642’, in E. Davies and B. Howells, eds., *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol III, Early Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest: Pembrokeshire Historical Society), pp. 38-9.

¹¹⁹ Owen, G., *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.36.

¹²⁰ C. Hassall, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Pembroke*, in *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol III, Early Modern Pembrokeshire*, p.46.

¹²¹ B. Howells, *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol III, Early Modern Pembrokeshire*, p.47.

Owen presents a picture of Pembrokeshire as clearly distinct from Wales, for example,

... a stranger travelling from England and having ridden four score miles and more in Wales, having heard no English, nor English names of people, or of places, and coming hither to Pembrokeshire, where he shall hear nothing but English, and seeing the rest before agreeable with England, would think that Wales were environed with England, and would imagine he had travelled through Wales and come into England again¹²²

The generalisation, “seeing the rest before agreeable with England”, seems to imply that, not only linguistically, but every other manifestation of the culture in Pembrokeshire matches that of England. Owen proposes that these manifestations of ‘Englishness’ are justified, when he comments, “These reasons ... might very fitly procure it the name of Little England Beyond Wales”.¹²³ However, there remains an element of doubt, implied by Owen through the use of the word ‘might’, that this is a debateable notion and, as a lawyer, there is a sense of ‘summing up’ the evidence with this comment,

... the king’s writ did run in ancient time into Wales as though the law did then account Pembrokeshire as part of England and not any part of Wales, and so might also the rather be termed Little England Beyond Wales.¹²⁴

Unlike Camden, Owen attempts to provide evidence for the use of the term by providing examples of ‘Englishness’, however these are presented in a discursive fashion, a subtlety which may have been overlooked by later readers of *The Description*, looking for a general overview of Pembrokeshire’s history and culture. How then did later commentators, antiquarians, tourists and travel writers use the contents of *The Description*, specifically relating in terms of the

¹²² G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. 36.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.37.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.36.

phrase Little England Beyond Wales, the Landsker and the Flemish settlement, given the proliferation of Owen's material in their works?

THREE: ANTIQUARIANS, TRAVELLERS AND TOURISTS: PORTRAYALS OF 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY PEMBROKESHIRE

i) The Home Tour and The Historical Account

Owen paints a picture of very clearly defined Welsh and English communities in early modern Pembrokeshire, and it is to his descriptions that later antiquarian and tourist writers repeatedly turn when writing their own accounts. To what extent they were influenced by Owen's writings in relation to the nature of the English/Welsh divide, Little England and the cultural mix of Pembrokeshire varies considerably, depending on their perspective; an historical or antiquarian account or a more colourful portrayal of Pembrokeshire as part of the Home Tour. It is relevant therefore to consider a representative sample of both styles of eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and travellers to the region, particularly the significant contributions of the Pembrokeshire antiquarians, Richard Fenton and Edward Laws. Their observations, along with those of George Owen, provided a 'historical' basis for later writers in their works, which were largely written for the purposes of tourism and entertainment.

The publication of numerous records of Home Tours undertaken by contemporary gentlemen, reflected the new-found interest in 'Celtic' regions such as Wales and Scotland and the growth of 'Celticism' as an intellectual and academic movement. In Wales, the revival of the Eisteddfod in the early nineteenth century and the establishment of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion were formed to promote the notion of Welsh (Celtic) history

and identity as separate from that of England.¹²⁵ Of the motivations of this new group of travellers and writers, Constantine remarks that,

Liberally inclined, nurtured in Enlightenment notions of progress and improvement, the professional and gentry classes who undertook these journeys earnestly desired more than economic or strategic union, yearning for cordiality and sentiment.¹²⁶

One of the earliest writers in this genre, Thomas Pennant of Flintshire, published two popular accounts of his Scottish tours in 1769 and 1772, and the successful reception of his writing combined with his love of travel motivated him to write a similar account of his native Wales. A shift towards Romanticism and an interest in the Gothic Revival is demonstrated in the ‘Advertisement’ of Pennant’s first volume relating to Wales, when he declares that,

In a future volume the wild and romantic scenery will be presented, intermixed with the rich vallies so frequently interspersed.¹²⁷

The 18th century movement in taste from classical symmetrical order to this type of highly descriptive writing depicting, “the wild, the ruinous and the romantic”¹²⁸ filtered through to all forms of public art. This, linked with the Celtic Revival movement, ensured that Wales, Scotland and Ireland became popular destinations for those embarking on the Home Tour. The literary shift of focus and style from Owen’s detailed account of the minutiae of Pembrokeshire life

¹²⁵ National Museum of Wales, ‘Welsh Artists of the Eighteenth Century’, museum.wales (online). Available at: <https://museum.wales/cardiff/art/historic/welsh-artists-18th-century/> <accessed 2 February 2020>

¹²⁶ M.A. Constantine, “‘To trace thy country’s glories to their source’: Dangerous History in Thomas Pennant’s *Tour in Wales*”, in P. Fermanis and J. Regan (eds.), *Rethinking British Romantic History 1770-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 121-144, p.124. Available at: www.oxfordscholarship.com <accessed 2 February 2020>

¹²⁷ T. Pennant, *Tours in Wales Vol. 1* (London: Benjamin White, 1784), p.i. Available at: <https://viewer.library.wales/4690846> <accessed 2 February 2020>

¹²⁸ A. Payne, ‘The Antiquarian Tradition,’ British Library (online). Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/the-antiquarian-tradition> <accessed 30 June 2019>

towards a more romantic, descriptive view of Wales becomes evident at this time.

Pennant's *Tours in Wales*, published in 1778, lays down a format for travellers, and Constantine makes the important point that by,

... linking both local and antiquarian knowledge of the past to specific sites, he also created a 'public' version of history which was far more widely disseminated than that being created and contested in scholarly historical narratives.¹²⁹

That these accounts were popular and more widely read than academic histories is crucial, indicating the significance and influence of both the style and content of these narratives. Though Pennant did not visit Pembrokeshire himself, it is through this type of writing that prevailing views of its past were disseminated and popularised by later visitors to the region. The use of these terms and their accompanying concepts were not based on historical enquiry but on generally accepted ideas, dating back to information found in Camden's *Britannia* and Owen's *Description*.

As previously noted, *The Description* was made available for wider reading due to the efforts of Richard Fenton of Manorowen, a lawyer, antiquarian, poet and country gentleman, whose own work, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, was published in 1811. That Fenton was influenced by Pennant is highly likely, he had previously written Romantic-style verses celebrating Pennant's *Tours in Wales*, being "particularly impressed by Pennant as a man of action".¹³⁰ However, the work of Owen is of far more significance to Fenton; textual references and quotes from the *Description*, as well as great praise for Owen himself, appear frequently in his work. He acknowledges this

¹²⁹ M.A. Constantine, "To trace thy country's glories to their source': Dangerous History in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales*", p.123.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p.122.

when he writes, “By some, perhaps, I may be thought to have been too liberal of my quotations from the old Pembrokeshire antiquary”.¹³¹ Fenton’s publication in *The Cambrian Register* of Owen’s *Description*, contains copious and detailed footnotes and comments on the text made by his great-grandfather John Lewis, who had previously possessed the manuscript before bequeathing it to his descendant. In a preliminary note to the reader, Fenton addresses the predilection of Lewis to colourful comments, apologetically noting that,

... the vast mass of supplementary matter collected by my ancestor, was never meant to meet the public eye in the state I found it, having undergone very little arrangement, and as it was very richly interlarded with personal invective and private anecdotes of families ... I could not with any degree of delicacy suffer [the manuscript] to go abroad ... I have been able to make use of but a very small portion of his collection.¹³²

With this information in mind, Miles adds that Fenton was “carefree” in editing Owen’s manuscript, noting that, “He omitted paragraphs, and even chapters, and, ... added or rearranged words and phrases at will”.¹³³ However, the extracts which record Little England Beyond Wales and the cultural make-up of the region appear intact. Following the publication of Owen’s work, his portrayal of early modern Pembrokeshire, including his descriptions of the stark divide in the region, begin to appear in later tourist writings, largely through the efforts and endorsement of Richard Fenton. That Fenton was using a manuscript edited by his great-grandfather and subsequently also edited this himself, is significant.

¹³¹ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees et al., 1811), p.563.

¹³² J. Lewis, ‘A History of Pembrokeshire’, edited by R. Fenton, *The Cambrian Register*, II: (1796) 53-231, p.53. Available at: <https://journals.library.wales/view/2867877/2961120/> <accessed 4 December 2019>

¹³³ D. Miles, ‘Introduction’ in *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.xlv.

In 1810, the *Monthly Review or Literary Journal* published a review of a pocket-book of the tourist itinerary of Wales, noting that, “Of late years, a Tour into Wales has been considered by many persons as forming part of a complete education.”¹³⁴ The list of authors is extensive, the reviewers commenting that, “...the distinct routes of Aikin, Barber, Bingley, Coxe, Donovan, Evans, Hutton, Malkin, Pennant, Skrine, Warner and Wyndham are preserved.”¹³⁵ Though their work covered all areas in Wales, in 1803, J.T. Barber, an English philanthropist, painter and businessman, published an account which included a detailed description of his journey through Pembrokeshire. In *A Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire*, Barber colourfully records his travels in the region and includes much interesting information relating to local customary practices. The referencing of earlier, historical writers is characteristic of travel writers at this time, possibly to add historical authenticity to the text, and Barber typically acknowledges Leland, Gerald of Wales and Camden in his work.¹³⁶ It is noteworthy that he does not include George Owen; Barber is writing after the publication of *The Description* in *The Cambrian Register* but, perhaps crucially, before Fenton’s own volume, published in 1811. This may indicate that Owen’s work became more widely read through Fenton’s *Historical Tour*, additionally highlighting any issues relating to the successive editing of Owen’s text, as previously noted.

Barber writes of a clear division in Pembrokeshire, using capitals as indicated,

Camden calls this district, “LITTLE ENGLAND beyond Wales”; and the difference of appearance, customs, and language, between the inhabitants

¹³⁴ W-Re-s, ‘Art. 30. The Cambrian Traveller’s Guide and Pocket Companion’, *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, 1752-1825, 61: (1810) 218-219, p.219. Available at: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/docview/4688116> <accessed 12 December 2019>

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p.219.

¹³⁶ J. Barber, *A Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803), pp. 47-64.

of southern Pembrokeshire and their neighbours, is strikingly obvious at the present day.¹³⁷

Additionally, he comments on the linguistic differences, including an account from his host at Carew,

Who exultingly assured me, that Pembrokeshire was out of Wales; that he (a native of the place) was an Englishman; and for his part he did not understand any thing of the Welch gibberish.¹³⁸

This account appears to provide circumstantial evidence for the linguistic differences in Pembrokeshire and concurs with Owen's description of starkly divided communities. Barber continues with a description of the Pembrokeshire people,

The men tall and well made, evidently incline more to the English character than the Welch; yet they possess some personal traits distinct from either: I imagined, indeed, in many of the peasantry a resemblance to the present inhabitants of Flanders.¹³⁹

Interestingly, Barber uses the word 'imagined' indicating that his observations are purely speculative, however the romantic image of Flemish ancestry in the region is clearly demonstrated, though he does not claim to present an historical text. His work is representative of the curious blend of an entertaining (and frequently salacious), adventurous memoir, set against an 'historic' backdrop.

Concerns relating to the style and nature of travel writing at the time are voiced by a contemporary of Barber, Edward Donovan, an amateur zoologist and natural historian. Writing in 1805, he notes that he has read many of the recent published tours in Wales and dryly remarks that whilst,

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.68.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p.69.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

... there is much to admire, ... there is also too much reason to apprehend that the amusement, rather than the information of the reader, has been most frequently consulted.¹⁴⁰

In his work *Descriptive Excursions Through South Wales and Monmouthshire*, he describes himself as a factual writer, contrary to the prevailing literary norm of the genre, and, “He is perfectly aware that he may at times have corrected the sallies of fancy at the risqué of proving himself a dull companion”.¹⁴¹

Furthermore, he appears to have little faith in the critical abilities of contemporary tourists, remarking that they are “...unwilling to search beyond the trammels of the readiest authority”¹⁴², giving credibility to the notion of a non-critical uptake of ‘historical’ information at this time. Donovan presents an eclectic blend of natural history observation and a description of some of the antiquities of the county, again set in an historic context. His sources include Caradoc of Lancarvan and he quotes Leland fairly frequently, however in a footnote relating to an ancient building at Ty Gwyn, Donovan expressly references, “John Lewis of Manarnawan, in his MSS. Notes on Owen’s Hist. of Pembrokeshire”,¹⁴³ and later, in another reference, relating to Gilbert Strongbow, “Owen. MSS”,¹⁴⁴ clearly indicating that he had read Owen’s work.

However, despite referencing Owen, Donovan does not use the term Little England or the Landsker in his work, even though he visited border areas such as Narberth. Additionally, he does not emphasise the linguistic division in Pembrokeshire which, according to other writers, was a dominant characteristic of the region, though he does record that English was universally spoken in Tenby.¹⁴⁵ He also documents the Flemish settlement of the region and notes

¹⁴⁰ E. Donovan, *Descriptive Excursions Through South Wales and Monmouthshire Vol. I* (London: Printed for the Author, 1805), p.4. Available at: www.babel.hathitrust.org <accessed 5 November 2020>

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p.293.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.331.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.363.

that the inhabitants of the town are, "... now an evident intermixture of the Flemish character with the Welsh and the English."¹⁴⁶ Whilst it is interesting that Donovan proposes both Welsh and English ancestry for the residents of Tenby, like Barber, his evidence rests on a mix of first-hand observation and speculation.

In terms of an historical appraisal of Pembrokeshire, the contribution of Benjamin Malkin, a Professor of History, is significant. In 1803, Malkin toured South Wales, and a year later published *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography of South Wales*, including a lengthy description of Pembrokeshire in Volume Two. Malkin introduces the chapter with a quote from John Selden, a contemporary of Owen, providing details of the Flemish settlement and significantly implying that 'non-Welshness' is a notable characteristic of the area.¹⁴⁷ Presenting a resolutely un-Romantic view of the Flemish settlers, Malkin proposes that Henry I,

...placed among them Englishmen ... to teach them the English language; and now ... it is Englishmen they are, and the depredators of South Wales, addicted to deceit and false swearing ...¹⁴⁸

Ultimately, he writes, both groups, "...established themselves so firmly, that they could never afterwards be rooted out."¹⁴⁹ Malkin points out that the Flemings did not maintain their own language or adopt the Welsh language, but instead spoke English, "... nothing else is to heard at this day in the hundreds of Ross and Castle Martin."¹⁵⁰ Additionally, he remarks that he is surprised at the "correctness" of the English used in these areas, though they are surrounded by, "such a circle of native Welsh,"¹⁵¹ and also that there is no patois to be

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.363.

¹⁴⁷ B. Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography of South Wales*, p.177.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.179.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.180.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.182.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

found, such as in Welsh-speaking “St. Dewy’s”.¹⁵² He accounts for this by remarking that the settlers “... avoided all connexion with the Welsh; and so they do in some measure to this day”.¹⁵³

Malkin further explores the theme of division in the county in his description of Little England Beyond Wales, noting the similarity of the landscape to England; it is, “... as close as the affinity of its inhabitants to the English people; so that it has been called Little England Beyond Wales”.¹⁵⁴ In a close copy of Owen’s work he lists the commonalities: surnames, building styles, agricultural practices and churches.¹⁵⁵ The content and layout suggests that he may have read *The Description*, however, it is remarkable that he does not reference, or even mention, the earlier antiquarian. He also writes that, “The great division of the county is into English and Welsh”,¹⁵⁶ and details the English speaking and Welsh speaking hundreds, using exactly the same numbers as Owen: 74 English and 64 Welsh. Both authors also note the mixed areas – Narberth and some areas of Rhos and Daugleddau, - the boundaries appearing remarkably consistent over a period of two hundred years.

Crucially, Malkin then diverges significantly from Owen in terms of the interaction between the two groups. He writes that, “It is far from the fact that these two descriptions of people are so estranged from each other as to never marry”,¹⁵⁷ giving several instances of intermarriage between the two communities in English areas. He describes the description of this separation as “highly unnatural” and, in what appears to be an indictment of Owen *et al.*, he writes that,

It is one of those strange tales, which having once gone abroad, is inadvertently bandied about, by the very people of whom it is told.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.182.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.199.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.200.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.201.

Malkin proposes that this “tale” stems from early hostilities between Flemish and English settlers and the Welsh and adds that,

... after the tranquillity of centuries, that so unaccountable a reserve should continue among the inhabitants of a little district, not exceeding a square of thirty miles, under the same government and laws, frequenting the same weekly markets for the sale of their agricultural produce, and united by the same interests, is in itself improbable, and will be found to be a mistake, to the extent in which it is asserted.¹⁵⁹

This seems a plausible and logical proposition. Malkin ascribes the original concept to Gerald and suggests that the historical context at the time of Gerald’s writing made this more likely, as the two nations were “at war”. From this point in time, therefore, Malkin proposes that,

... the notion was scattered abroad in popular opinion and tales ... while the original facts and circumstances that occasioned them, have been vanishing gradually away.¹⁶⁰

He adds that due to language differences, interactions between neighbours may be rather more limited and, in a potentially veiled criticism of Owen, he writes that, “... the accounts of absolute and unconquerable alienation, contained in many writers, are by far too highly coloured”.¹⁶¹

It is interesting that Malkin has followed the pattern of Owen’s *Description* but takes issue with the concept of a stark division between English and Welsh communities, described quite clearly by Owen. It is possible that the split was more accentuated in Owen’s time and that two hundred years later communities co-existed in a more integrated manner, as observed by Malkin. However, Barber’s account, contemporaneous with Malkin, concurs with that of Owen’s. Malkin, the academic, presents a historical appraisal of the county,

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp.200-201.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.201.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

whereas Barber, the army officer and painter, writes an entertaining account of his exploits in the region in an entertaining and sensational style. It is likely that readers would have found Barber's account far more engaging than that of Malkin's, preferring a more entertaining read than a carefully reasoned academic argument. This links back to the creation of a 'public' version of history, proposed by Constantine in her article relating to Pennant's tours in Wales, in which she notes that this type of accessible writing was, "far more widely disseminated than that being created and contested in scholarly historical narratives".¹⁶²

ii) **Richard Fenton of Manorowen.**

Having made Owen's *Description* available to the public, the Pembrokeshire antiquarian Richard Fenton clearly demonstrates the influence of Owen in his own popular work, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, published in 1811. Fenton's text is frequently referenced in later studies of the region and is an interesting, entertaining and highly detailed account of his observations. Additionally, it has served as the means by which a wider readership might encounter the writings of George Owen and his predecessors. His frequent references to the contents of *The Description* prompted an explanation, in the form of an endorsement, from Fenton,

... 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.¹⁶³

¹⁶² M.A. Constantine, "To trace thy country's glories to their source': Dangerous History in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales*", p.4.

¹⁶³ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, p.563.

Fenton adds further praise for Owen, describing him as “... that painful and accurate antiquary”¹⁶⁴, “indefatigable in all his researches”¹⁶⁵, the “great antiquary”¹⁶⁶ and “... so correct and descriptive”¹⁶⁷; Fenton’s respect for both the man and his work is evident. He also includes frequent references to Owen’s claims to the Lordship of Cemais, for example, “In several respects this lordship marcher of Cemaes was of a higher nature than the palatinate of Pembroke”.¹⁶⁸ This glowing praise would presumably not have been lost on his readers and Owen’s authority and historical accuracy on matters relating to Pembrokeshire established.

In his detailed work, Fenton has much to say on the concept of the Landsker, particularly as a boundary popularly supposed to be delineated by Norman-built castles, though he, like Owen, does not use the capitalised term. The idea of a line of border castles demarcating the Landsker line appears to be a modern concept.¹⁶⁹ However, David Austin remarks that,

It was certainly ... never a frontier manned by castles, although their construction in all parts of Pembrokeshire may have been generally encouraged by the Crown.¹⁷⁰

Similarly, Fenton observes that castles such as Roch and Wiston were used as ‘barrier fortresses’, by the Normans and the Flemings.¹⁷¹ However, he significantly notes that many were the creations of the deposed Welsh princes,

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.169.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.203.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.357.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.557.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.550.

¹⁶⁹ See for example, ‘The Flemish colonists in Wales’, [bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/immig_emig/wales/w_sw/article_2.shtml) (online). Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/immig_emig/wales/w_sw/article_2.shtml <accessed 8 December 2019>

¹⁷⁰ D. Austin, ‘Little England Beyond Wales: Redefining the Myth’, p.40.

¹⁷¹ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, pp.145-6.

subsequently chosen by the Normans for their, “judicious eligibility of position”.¹⁷² Additionally, he proposes that,

there is not a better criterion for fixing the line of demarcation between the native Welsh and the new settlers in this county than their churches.¹⁷³

This interesting concept is not found in Owen’s *Description*, however it is contained in a footnote by Fenton’s ancestor, John Lewis, on Owen’s manuscript.¹⁷⁴ Fenton uses the example of the Norman church at Robeston Wathen, amongst others, as an,

...almost certain criterion of the limits of their colony and by which, better than by any other now existing circumstance, may be traced their progress.¹⁷⁵

In terms of the nature of the geographic and linguistic division between the Welsh-speaking and English-speaking inhabitants of the shire, Fenton is quite clear. He comments that the Cleddau river forms a natural boundary between the two groups and is, “One of the grand boundaries between the Englishery and Welshery, between Dewisland and Roos”.¹⁷⁶ Without any reference to the word *landsker*, Fenton describes the boundary as,

... so correctly drawn, that to this day, on one side of a brook, one can step over almost in any part, they talk nothing but that barbarous English peculiar to the hundred of Roos, and on the other nothing but Welsh; I mean among the common people.¹⁷⁷

Emphasising this clear distinction and ascribing this to the influx of Flemish and English settlers, he adds,

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p.308.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p.149.

¹⁷⁴ J. Lewis, ‘A History of Pembrokeshire’, p. 72.

¹⁷⁵ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, p.309.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.151.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

... and to that may be ascribed the predominancy of the English language in those parts of Pembrokeshire ... a distinction not yet worn out, notwithstanding the more frequent intermixture of the Welshery and Englishery of late years, insomuch that the barrier line is to this day strictly preserved, and a brook or a footpath is known to separate the languages.¹⁷⁸

In an interesting parallel with Malkin, and despite describing a clear geographical division between the two districts, Fenton states that there is some interaction between the communities, differing to the account of Owen. He concludes that it is not surprising that,

... this part of this county ... continued to inherit prejudices (not yet fairly eradicated) to keep them a separate people, [and so] should be called Little England beyond Wales.¹⁷⁹

Invoking Camden's term *Anglia Transwallia*, Fenton additionally observes that the area was subject to English law, a concept emphasised by Owen, also a lawyer; there is a sense that for both this provides the ultimate evidence of its status as a separate legal identity within Wales.

Like Owen, Fenton comments on the social status of linguistic groups in the region, observing that English was prevalent amongst those of Flemish descent and the 'lower orders.' On visiting Orielson, in the Castlemartin district, he remarks that, "The names of some of the principal Norman and Flemish settlers are only to be found amongst the vulgar",¹⁸⁰ for example, Malefant and Tankard. This provides evidence of changes in the social status of the settlers and their assimilation into the wider population, or 'lower orders'. However, Fenton's Romantic perspective is evident when he writes that the inhabitants of Marloes are "... industrious like their original ancestry the Flemings",¹⁸¹ and in

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.151

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.240.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.429.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.163.

Landshipping, citing Owen , “who has investigated those matters with more minuteness than any man”,¹⁸² he notes that, “there are more foreign hereditary customs kept up here than in any other part of Roos”.¹⁸³ It is a contradiction inherent in the text that Fenton cites Owen despite Owen’s conclusions that, “...as for the Flemings ... there is no show of any remnant of them left.”¹⁸⁴ Fenton appears to support the concept of Flemish influence in the region, his speculations include such diverse evidence as surnames, hereditary customs, work ethics, building style and language. In Rhos he describes his conversation with a local inhabitant and reproduces her words, “‘Whay,’ says she in the true Roos accent, ‘a bee one Dolly Roch, sir, thay zay’,”¹⁸⁵ neatly ascribing the Rhos accent as Flemish in derivation. However, this sounds remarkably like a West Country accent; recent research indicates that the South Pembrokeshire dialect owes much to this part of England, adding further evidence for Awbery’s proposal that Pembrokeshire shares linguistic connections with the Westcountry.¹⁸⁶

Fenton’s portrayal of Pembrokeshire may well be accurate at the time of his writing, however the frequency and faithfulness with which he quotes Owen, writing some two hundred years earlier, may add some anachronisms to his account. Fenton, however, justifies this by remarking that the information in Owen’s text is,

... so correct and descriptive, that I am tempted to give it in his own forcible words ... as I have done throughout in my frequent quotations

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p.178.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.39.

¹⁸⁵ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, p.239.

¹⁸⁶ Dyfed Dialect, Mr & Mrs M Talk About Traditional Haymaking Practice, british library.uk (online). Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dyfed-dialect-mr-and-mrs-m-traditional-haymaking-practice> <accessed 20 March 2020>

from him, which, by presuming to vary or modernize, to make them more my own, I should have weakened.¹⁸⁷

The inherent issue of the accuracy of Owen's account is relevant here and Fenton, by faithfully reproducing Owen's descriptions, enables the continuity of these perceptions to a wider reading public. Fenton's entertaining work republished in 1903 under royal patronage, was recently summarised by Brynley F. Roberts in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as,

... more tour literature than history, ... being an attractive mixture of accurate reporting and recording interspersed with personal descriptions of scenery and accounts of oral history, local legends, and substantial alfresco meals.¹⁸⁸

Additionally, in a significant endorsement of Fenton's work, the editors of *The Pembrokeshire County History*, published in 1987, note that Fenton,

... was to be granted the satisfaction of revealing the county to itself and to the world ... in a way that no son of Pembrokeshire had done since George Owen of Henllys.¹⁸⁹

With such a stamp of approval, Fenton, and by extension Owen and his predecessors, are established as significant and influential authorities on Pembrokeshire historical matters.

iii) Edward Laws of Tenby

In 1888, Edward Laws, the Tenby antiquarian, wrote that if a visitor to Pembrokeshire was confused by the cultural mix of the area, they would, "most likely [be] referred to Fenton's *Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*",¹⁹⁰ demonstrating the popularity of Fenton's work. However, in *The History of*

¹⁸⁷ R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, p.557.

¹⁸⁸ B. F. Roberts, 'Fenton, Richard', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, oxforddnb.com (online). Available at: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/> <accessed 3 March 2020>

¹⁸⁹ R. Thorne *et al.*, 'Pembrokeshire in Wartime, 1793-1815', in E. Davies and B. Howells, (eds.), *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol III, Early Modern Pembrokeshire, 1536-1815*, p.383.

¹⁹⁰ E. Laws, *The History of Little England Beyond Wales and the Non-Kymric Colony settled in Pembrokeshire*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), p. iii.

Little England Beyond Wales, and the Non-Kymric Colony Settled in Pembrokeshire, Laws remarks that though Fenton's is an "admirable work", it is, "perhaps not quite what he [the reader] requires";¹⁹¹ citing developments in archaeology and the opening of the National Records as significant in terms of providing a more scientific view on the past. Seventy years earlier Fenton had claimed similar advances, writing that, "History now, unincumbered with the idle trappings of superstition or credulity, takes us by the hand, and presents us with facts instead of fables".¹⁹² Whilst both writers claim that their works are factually based, it is ironic that both have relied heavily upon Owen, who lays no claims to 'scientific' facts or research.

Laws was born in 1837 in Lamphrey, Pembrokeshire, of an Anglo-Welsh gentry family, becoming High Sherriff of Pembrokeshire in 1899. His interests lay mainly in archaeological research, publishing *An Archaeological Survey of Pembrokeshire* in 1908, and working closely with Henry Owen who had earlier produced a transcript of Owen's *Description* in 1892.¹⁹³ Significant chapters in his work are devoted to 'Elizabethan Pembrokeshire', 'The Flemish Immigration' and 'Cambria Triumphans', in which he explores the 'low esteem' in which the Welsh were held by the English at the beginning of the fifteenth century and the rise of the Tudor dynasty.¹⁹⁴ He appears to take a similar view, describing the Welsh as "incapable of self-government",¹⁹⁵ and portraying the Norman invasion of Wales as necessary and successful. However, despite his claims of writing of the 'non-Kymric Colony', he includes detailed accounts of Cemais, Dewisland and St Davids; all of which were Welsh-speaking areas and not part of Little England. Laws attributes the creation of Little England itself

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁹² R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*, p.53.

¹⁹³ B. G. Charles, 'Laws, Edward (1837-1913), Historian of Pembrokeshire', Dictionary of Welsh Biography, biography.wales (online). Available at: <https://biography.wales/article/s-LAWS-EDW-1837> <accessed 20 August 2019>

¹⁹⁴ E. Laws, *The History of Little England Beyond Wales*.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.94.

to the ‘brotherhood’ between the earlier Scandinavian settlers, the Norsemen and the Normans, commenting that it is to this relationship that, “... we must attribute the ease with which South Pembroke detached itself from Kymru and became Little England beyond Wales”.¹⁹⁶

Laws’ chapter relating to the Flemish settlement owes much to his acknowledged sources; Hollingshed, Caradoc of Llancarvan, William of Malmesbury, John Trevis and George Owen.¹⁹⁷ He concludes that there is ample well documented evidence of Flemish settlement in the area and addresses the issue of their remaining linguistic influence in the area. Quoting Owen, he proposes that the settlers were of a lower social status and that,

...in the 12th century, Flemish did not differ much more from English than does the patois of Lancashire from that of Somerset in the 19th.¹⁹⁸

Laws provides interesting examples of similar Flemish and English words and their meanings, claiming that several Pembrokeshire dialect words were similar, if not the same, as their Dutch equivalent,¹⁹⁹ a concept still popular in contemporary Pembrokeshire.²⁰⁰ Laws focuses on his familiar Tenby to provide other examples of Flemish influence. He notes that,

... At Pembroke and Haverfordwest among the lower order, recollection of immigration seems nearly to have died out, but at Tenby all classes claim the Flemings for their forbears.²⁰¹

This differs from Owen’s account, in which he records that, “divers of the common people, swains and labourers of the county, are descended of those

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.95.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp.107-8.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.108.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.118.

²⁰⁰ For example, R. Scourfield and K. Johnson, *Below the Landsker* (Cresswell Quay: Jackyando Books, 2008).

²⁰¹ E. Laws, *The History of Little England Beyond Wales*, p.116.

Flemings”.²⁰² Perhaps Laws has documented the uptake of the popular perception of Flemish ancestry in South Pembrokeshire, safely distanced by time, as suggested by Malkin. Additionally, Malkin’s proposal that the division between the Welsh and English was based on ‘popular opinion and tales’,²⁰³ seems to apply equally to this belief.

Laws goes on to cite early architectural styles, saints’ dedications (St Catherine – patron saint of weavers) and local stories relating to wool factories in Tenby as evidence for Flemish settlement, though he dismisses the widely-held idea of ‘Flemish chimneys’ declaring that, “... nothing resembling them exists in the Low Countries”.²⁰⁴ Laws also accredits to the Flemings an eclectic range of artefacts and practices as proof of their influence: the practice of weaving, the local name for shellfish as ‘The Fleming’, ‘pre-eminent’ agricultural practices, the long-handed shovel and the ‘common stone drain’. The list seems to be rooted in speculation rather than historical evidence, for example, writing of the drain, he remarks that, “The Norman master got the credit, but probably the Flemish farmer introduced the improvement”.²⁰⁵ There is no evidence to support this and by interweaving speculation with historical and archaeological findings, Laws presents persuasive, albeit flawed, evidence. His romantic, and far from scientific, comments on the legacy of the Flemings in Pembrokeshire are exemplified in a frequently quoted extract from his text,

Go into any fair or market in South Pembrokeshire, and it will be strange if you do not observe certain fair haired, light eyed women ... If young, many of them have a complexion of strawberries and cream, and might have come direct from Antwerp ...²⁰⁶

²⁰² G. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p.39.

²⁰³ B. H. Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography, of South Wales*, p.201.

²⁰⁴ E. Laws, *The History of Little England Beyond Wales*, p.116.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.118.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.119.

However, it is in the chapter on *Elizabethan Pembroke* that highly significant information relating to the Landsker line is contained, which appears to have been overlooked by modern academics and historians alike. Laws devotes the majority of the chapter to the work of Owen, remarking that, “...it would be impossible to find a closer observer, or a more careful narrator”.²⁰⁷ Though Laws does not directly state which version of Owen’s manuscript he has consulted, in a text note he refers to the comments of Fenton’s ancestor, John Lewis, and gives the reference “*in the edition printed by Fenton”.²⁰⁸ It is clear that the information contained in the chapter follows Owen’s text closely, indeed the first seven pages are termed, by Laws, a “precis” of the *Description*.²⁰⁹ He quotes Owen extensively, particularly in terms of the cultural and ethnic mix of the region and noting the social divisions amongst these groups. However, unlike Fenton, he does comment on the passage of time, adding a historical and comparative perspective to Owen’s work,

Owen speaks so confidently as to the poor physique of his contemporaries that we cannot doubt his word; yet his annotator, John Lewis, writing one hundred years later, could see no such degredation, and certainly the Pembroke men of today are above the average in strength and stature.²¹⁰

Recording the separation of English and Welsh speaking areas, Laws follows the pattern set down by both Owen and Fenton, demonstrating the remarkable stability of both the boundaries and communities. However, disregarding both his literary predecessors, he then comments that,

The Landsker or boundary that divided the languages began at Cronwere ...This boundary line would have been almost as accurate twenty years ago as when the account was penned in 1603 ...²¹¹

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.296.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.297.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.302.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.297.

²¹¹ *ibid.*

It is of the utmost significance that Laws has capitalised the word ‘Landsker’ in a work which is elsewhere remarkably consistent in its use of punctuation and conforms to modern standards. This appears to be, as yet, the earliest recorded use of the word ‘Landsker’ to describe the specific boundary line between English and Welsh-speaking districts in Pembrokeshire. It can be seen that Laws’ use of the term is a clear example of the modified usage of the word as a proper noun, rather than as used by Owen and Fenton, in its original sense, as a dialect word for any boundary. This is a highly significant finding as this predates the example found in *The Land Survey* of 1939, quoted by Awbery as the earliest use of the term in this context, by a period of approximately sixty years, roughly the difference between Fenton’s work and that of Laws.²¹² Laws’ use of the term does not appear to have been recorded elsewhere, though he was a popular author and commentator on Pembrokeshire affairs.

Edward Laws is unequivocal in his perception of the ‘Englishness’ of South Pembrokeshire, the title of his work can leave the reader in no doubt of this and the term and concept of Little England is freely used, almost as a ‘given’, throughout the book. His work contains interesting evidence, and much speculation, relating to living conditions, agricultural, religious and customary practices in late Victorian West Wales, including naming conventions. However, crucially for this study, in Edward Laws’ work the earliest use of the capitalised term Landsker can be found to date, indicating that amongst the speculative material and ‘scientific’ information, his work contains an item of historical and contemporary cultural importance. It provides, for the first time on record, a specific name, the ‘Landsker’, for the historic, linguistic boundary line in Pembrokeshire.

²¹² G. Awbery, ‘The Term ‘Landsker’ in Pembrokeshire’, p.32.

FOUR: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

In 1895, on the cusp of the 20th century, H Thornhill Timmins, an English surgeon, published *Nooks and Corners of Pembrokeshire*, as part of a series of travel guides. This popular book, reprinted several times, is an ideal tourist guide for visitors to Pembrokeshire providing sightseeing routes, pointing out items of historical interest interwoven with natural history notes, and using an engaging narrative style of direct address to promote the inclusion of the reader in the writer's experience. The guide is typical of tourist writing of the period, blending an entertaining and useful account of Pembrokeshire alongside elements of the accepted public history of the region. Significantly, selected information in historical and antiquarian accounts, such as those of Gerald of Wales, Leland, Camden, Owen, Fenton and Laws are presented by modern authors as facts, regardless of historiographical considerations. For example, acknowledging Fenton and Owen in the Preface, Timmins opening remarks are unequivocal, "The south-western portion of the county ... is as English as Oxfordshire, and hence has acquired the title of 'Little England beyond Wales'."²¹³ Additionally, Timmins writes picturesque snapshots of tourist destinations along his route; at Langwm, he notes that,

... this singular people form an interesting little community, which appears to have preserved intact to the present day much of the manners and customs of the early Flemish colonists.²¹⁴

His descriptions add historical colour to the region and the continuity with modern tourist literature and web content is evident.

The debt to Owen, Fenton and Laws in terms of shared perceptions, identity and the terminology of Pembrokeshire, both historic and contemporary, is substantial. Commenting on the significance of these three writers amongst

²¹³ H. Thornhill Timmins, *Nooks and Corners of Pembrokeshire* (London: Elliot Stock, 1895), p.viii.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.18.

many, Ann Sayers, in the Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society, notes that, “ ... when it comes to a comprehensive chronological narrative of the history of the County ... the choice narrows.”²¹⁵ Over the period of several hundred years, the presentation of Pembrokeshire as a divided region, with a clear delineation between Welsh and English speakers has varied, however the terminology of Little England Beyond Wales and its boundary, the Landsker, has become part of the perceived historical and cultural fabric of the region. Additionally, the influence of the medieval Flemish settlers in the region has become a source of fascination and speculation up to the present day, despite different views on the extent of their legacy in terms of ancestry, culture, architecture, industry and linguistics.

The word Landsker appears to have passed into the collective unconsciousness of contemporary Pembrokeshire. Significantly, in its modern Pembrokeshire context, its meaning has evolved to describe the specific boundary between Welsh and English-speaking communities, though it was originally used by Owen simply as a dialect word for a boundary, the earliest change in meaning being found in the work of Edward Laws in 1888. For example, in the period 2000-06 the European Commission funded a project ‘Culture For a Better Quality of Life’ aimed at rejuvenating rural areas of Pembrokeshire through tourism. Surveying a thousand residents, they reported that their initial premise was confirmed,

... that the region’s main assets are its culture and natural heritage ... The first step was to define a product in terms of local identity: it was called the Landsker Borderlands.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ A. Sayer, ‘The History of Little England Beyond Wales Review’, *Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, (2016) (online). Available at: <http://www.pembrokeshirehistoricalsociety.co.uk/papers-from-the-past-2/> <accessed 2 February 2020>

²¹⁶ European Commission, ‘Culture For A Better Quality Of Life’, ec.europa.eu (online). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/united-kingdom/culture-for-a-better-quality-of-life <accessed 27 April 2020>

The use of the word Landsker in this context indicates its widespread acceptance in the region, and its perception as a legitimate term in which to describe the specific identity and culture of Pembrokeshire, additionally creating a useful tourist label.

The phrase Little England Beyond Wales, is not as evident in contemporary Pembrokeshire, perhaps due to the growth of a coherent linguistic and cultural Welsh identity, partly reflected in the rise in Welsh language schooling in the region. Contemporary issues relating to a specific sense of Pembrokeshire identity are still highly relevant, perhaps partly fuelled by the purchasing of second homes in the region, currently standing at 6%, a significantly higher proportion than any other area of Wales.²¹⁷ Additionally, it appears that interest in Flemish ancestry, observed by a range of writers from Camden through to Timmins and beyond, is still popular. Recent DNA research confirms that the genetic signature of South Pembrokeshire is essentially different to that of surrounding areas of Wales, however it closely resembles the South West of England, and certainly not The Netherlands.²¹⁸ Despite this the notion of Flemish influence persists, perhaps as it is perceived as preferable to English influence in this corner of Wales. Mary John, in her article, 'Where Are The Flemings?' has potentially recognised the importance and relevance of the legacy of the Flemish settlers in Pembrokeshire when she asks? "Did they not help to set us apart from the rest of Wales?"²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Citizens Advice, 'Pembrokeshire: Private Renting- Town vs. Country', citizensadvice.org.uk (online). Available at: [https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Housing/Publications/Dispatchesfromthefrontlinesofthehousingcrisis\(Pembrokeshire\).pdf](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Housing/Publications/Dispatchesfromthefrontlinesofthehousingcrisis(Pembrokeshire).pdf) <accessed 27 April 2020>

²¹⁸ UCL, 'The First Fine-Scale Genetic Map of the British Isles', ucl.ac.uk (online). Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2015/mar/first-fine-scale-genetic-map-british-isles> <accessed 27 August 2019>

²¹⁹ M. John, 'Where Are The Flemings?' (online).

In an interesting article, ‘Welshness in British Wales’, David Evans comments on the ‘resilience of internal regional boundaries’ in the country and the placement of South Pembrokeshire, ‘Little England Beyond Wales’, in the area defined as British Wales.²²⁰ Noting the stability of internal boundaries within Wales, he remarks that, “Borders are substantiated less by the distribution of social and political characteristics than by their successful narration and internalization by individuals”.²²¹ This implies the existence of the metanarrative, suggested by Austin, in the creation and promotion of the specific terminology of Pembrokeshire as ‘different’ from Wales and with a separate sense of identity, not English or Welsh, but ‘Pembrokeshire’. Turvey’s comment regarding the mixed Anglo/Norman and Welsh ancestry of the Pembrokeshire-born Gerald of Wales, describes this succinctly. He remarks that Gerald believed that he was,

not accepted by either side. ...A social and cultural dilemma shared down the centuries by those born in the Anglicized half of the county in that successive generations of ‘Little Englanders’ probably felt less alien but possibly more alienated.²²²

As if to exemplify this sense of a different identity, the publication, in 2008, of *Below The Landsker* contains much interesting information on the dialect and customary culture of South Pembrokeshire, but additionally perpetuates the terminology of differentiation. The differences between Wales and South Pembrokeshire are sharply defined, almost as clearly as Owen writing some 400 years earlier, for example, the authors note that,

A passing stranger with a strong Welsh accent is immediately stamped as being from ‘up the Welsh. The term still applies to a Welsh person

²²⁰ D.J. Evans, ‘Welshness’ in British Wales: negotiating national identity at the margins’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 25(1): (2019), 167-190. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12390>
<Accessed: 26 April 2020>

²²¹ *ibid.*, p.174.

²²² R. Turvey, *Pembrokeshire The Concise History*, p.36.

happily settled in the south, irrespective of how long they have lived in 'Little England'.²²³

The influence of the Landsker and Little England Beyond Wales on issues of identity in modern South Pembrokeshire are further demonstrated in a recent Wales Online article, in which it was proposed that the concept was simply no longer relevant, however this idea met with fierce opposition from some sections of the community.²²⁴ It is these perceptions of a 'different' sense of identity and culture, which ensure that the discussion relating to the area's differences continues.

This dissertation has attempted to examine the available evidence for the origin, propagation and dissemination of these terms, particularly in the light of new critical studies by a range of academics. In conclusion, the word 'landsker' appears to originate in the South West of England, similarly 'Little England Beyond Wales' may owe its title to successive waves of English settlers, particularly large groups from the Westcountry,²²⁵ whilst the effect of Flemish settlement, when examined, appears to be negligible. Central to this study are the terms 'Landsker' and Little England Beyond Wales, created and perpetuated by generations of antiquarians, historians and writers from the early medieval period, popularised in the personal accounts of the Home Tour and central to modern perceptions of Pembrokeshire. It is hoped that this closer examination of these texts and the ideas contained within them, may promote a deeper understanding of the terminology of the diverse, cultural heritage of both historic and contemporary Pembrokeshire.

²²³ R. Scourfield and K. Johnson, *Below the Landsker*, p.50.

²²⁴ S. Rhys, 'Call to Bury the Landsker Line', Wales Online, 29 Mar 2013 (online). Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/call-bury-landsker-line-2175471> <accessed 25 August 2019>

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