

Aberystwyth University

Of Cock Fights and Duels

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Dublin Core

Title

Of Cock Fights and Duels | Ymladd Ceiliogod a Gornesta

Subject

Holyhead

Caergybi

Carl Gottlob Küttner

Creator

Rita Singer

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/6P9X-44NL>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

53.31145989231727, -4.632297229532141

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

On 9 June 1783, Carl Gottlob Küttner spent a day in Holyhead discovering the town's diversions during his wait for the next boat to Dublin.

Lede (Welsh)

Ar 9 Mehefin 1783, treuliodd Carl Gottlob Küttner ddiwrnod yng Nghaergybi yn crwydro ar hyd y dref wrth iddo aros am y llong nesaf i Ddilyn.

Story

In 1783, Carl Gottlob Küttner (1755-1805) travelled via Holyhead to Dublin for his new post as house teacher and travel companion in the household of George Beresford (1735–1800), the second Earl of Tyrone. Originally from the Electorate of Saxony, Küttner worked as tutor in Switzerland where he caught the Anglo-Irish earl's interest. Tyrone hired the young German and invited him to join the family seat in Ireland. As an avid traveller with a keen interest in different cultures, Küttner kept a meticulous record of his journey.

After crossing the Channel at Calais, Küttner undertook a bit of sightseeing in England before heading westwards into Wales. Finding Anglesey's 'whole nature shrouded in sadness' owing to the island's sparse vegetation, Holyhead was more to his liking as he particularly enjoyed the view across the harbour from the window of his guesthouse. Waiting for the next mail boat for Dublin, Küttner discovered cockfighting and the town's involuntary role in Irish duelling.

Unlike other towns in Wales, such as Conwy, Denbigh or Welshpool, Holyhead did not have a built cockpit. Instead, the fights took place on a grassy patch near Küttner's guesthouse. In his travel account, he gives a detailed, if deeply disgusted description of the one and only time he witnessed the spectacle of two birds fight each other to the death. 'At last,' he writes, 'the animals bowed their heads to the ground, but even then they were pushed against another, and even then they would attack each other, half dead and swaying, until one of them remained motionless stretched on the ground.'

Küttner also visited a location that occasionally served as a duelling ground for Irish opponents. At the time, while not outright banned by law, duelling was treated as a serious offence in Ireland. The regular mail boats across the Irish Sea therefore turned Holyhead into the first and most easily reached port of call for Irish noblemen seeking satisfaction. Thinking of the social norms and pressures at home in the German countries, but also in Britain and Ireland, he writes, 'Man knows no higher good than life and places it above everything else – then he travels across the sea, braves a difficult crossing with the certainty, or at least probability, to destroy his life or that of another.' Even today, it is possible to find traces of these Irish duels in Holyhead. Major William Houghton was shot dead in a duel with Captain Wolsely in 1796. He was subsequently buried in St Cybi's churchyard where his tombstone can still be visited today.

The following morning, Küttner found a place on the next mail boat for Dublin where he landed thirty-six hours later after a stormy and rough crossing. He stayed in Ireland for the

next two years, before setting out again as travel companion for his young charge through Italy, the Netherlands and France. In 1793, Küttner returned to Leipzig where he published several books about his many extensive travels through Europe.

Story (Welsh)

Ym 1783, teithiodd Carl Gottlob Küttner (1755-1805) trwy Gaergybi i Ddilyn i gychwyn ar ei swydd newydd fel athro tŷ a chydymaith teithio ar aelwyd George Beresford (1735–1800), ail Iarll Tyrone. Roedd Küttner yn hanu o Etholaeth Saxony, ac yn gweithio fel tiwtor yn Y Swistir pan ddaliodd sylw yr Iarll Eingl-Wyddelig. Penderfynodd Tyrone gyflogi'r Almaenwr ifanc ac estynnodd wahoddiad iddo ddod i blasty y teulu yn Iwerddon. Fel teithiwr brwd gyda chryn ddiddordeb mewn gwahanol ddiwylliannau, cadwodd Küttner gofnod manwl o'i daith.

Ar ôl croesi'r Sianel yn Calais, ymwelodd Küttner â sawl man yn Lloegr cyn troi ei olygon am Gymru. Nododd bod 'natur gyfan Ynys Môn yn llawn tristwch' oherwydd llystyfiant prin yr ynys, ond roedd Caergybi wedi apelio yn fwy iddo ac roedd wedi mwynhau'r olygfa ar draws yr harbwr o ffenestr ei westy yn arbennig. Wrth aros am y long bost nesaf i Ddilyn, darganfu Küttner ymladd ceiliogod a rôl anwirfoddol y dref ym maes gornesta Gwyddelig.

Yn wahanol i drefi eraill yng Nghymru megis Conwy, Dinbych neu'r Trallwng, nid oedd gan Gaergybi bit ceiliogod adeiledig. Yn hytrach, cynhaliwyd yr ymladdfeydd ar ddarn o dir glaswelltog ger gwesty Küttner. Yn ei gofnod o'i daith, mae'n rhoi disgrifiad manwl ac mewn ffeidd-dod o'r unig adeg pan fu'n dyst i olygfa o ddau aderyn yn ymladd yn erbyn ei gilydd nes bod un ohonynt yn lladd y llall. 'O'r diwedd,' nododd, 'crymodd yr anifeiliaid eu pennau i'r llawr, ond hyd yn oed wedi hynny, fe'u gwthiwyd yn erbyn ei gilydd, a hyd yn oed wedi hynny, byddent yn ymosod ar ei gilydd, yn hanner marw ac yn simsanu nes bod un ohonynt yn gorwedd yn llonydd ar eu hyd ar y llawr.'

Yn ogystal, ymwelodd Küttner â lleoliad a oedd weithiau yn lleoliad gornestau ar gyfer gwrthwynebwyr Gwyddelig. Ar yr adeg honno, er nad oedd gornesta yn cael ei wahardd gan y gyfraith, roedd gornesta yn cael ei thrin fel trosedd ddifrifol yn Iwerddon. Felly, gwelwyd y llongau post rheolaidd a arferai groesi Môr Iwerddon yn gwneud Caergybi y man galw cyntaf a hawsaf i fonheddwyr Gwyddelig a oedd yn dymuno rhoi iawn i rhywun. Gan ystyried y normau cymdeithasol a'r pwysau gartref yn y gwledydd Almaenig, ond hefyd ym Mhrydain ac yn Iwerddon, mae'n ysgrifennu, 'Nid yw dyn yn gwybod daioni uwch na bywyd ac mae'n rhoi'r pwys mwyaf arno – yna mae'n croesi'r môr, gan wynebu taith anodd gyda'r sicrwydd, neu o leiaf y tebygolrwydd, y bydd yn dinistrio ei fywyd ei hun neu fywyd rhywun arall.' Hyd yn oed heddiw, gellir gweld olion y gornestau Gwyddelig hyn yng Nghaergybi. Saethwyd Uwchgapten William Houghton yn farw mewn gornest gyda Chaptan Wolsely ym 1796. Fe'i claddwyd ym mynwent eglwys St Cybi lle y gellir ymweld â'i garreg fedd hyd heddiw.

Y bore wedyn, llwyddodd Küttner i gael lle ar y llong bost nesaf i Ddilyn, lle y glaniodd dri deg chwech awr yr ddiweddarach yn dilyn taith stormus a garw. Arhosodd yn Iwerddon am y ddwy flynedd nesaf, cyn mynd ar daith unwaith eto fel cydymaith teithio ar gyfer y plentyn dan ei ofal trwy'r Eidal, yr Iseldiroedd a Ffrainc. Ym 1793, dychwelodd Küttner i Leipzig, lle y cyhoeddodd sawl llyfr am ei deithiau helaeth ar draws Ewrop.

Factoid

Related Resources

Carl Gottlob Küttner, *[Beyträge zur Kenntniss vorzüglich des Innern von England und seiner Einwohner](#)* (Leipzig, 1791)

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Peter Scott Roberts, 'Dueling at Holyhead', *Holyhead: Stories of a Port*, Holyhead Maritime Museum, 2019. <https://holyheadstoriesofaport.com/2019/04/06/dueling-at-holyhead/>

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