

## SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For its February meeting the Society welcomed Dr Richard Llewellyn Davies whose illustrated lecture had for its title 'In the Footsteps of Richard Fenton – an historical tour'

Richard Fenton was born at St David's in 1747 and educated at the cathedral school and Magdalen College, Oxford though he appears not to have completed his degree. He worked for a time at the Custom House before entering the Middle Temple in 1774. He was called to the Bar in 1783 and largely practised on the Welsh Circuit, at one time living at Machynlleth. While in London he moved in literary circles and counted Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, the actor David Garrick and Sir Richard Colt Hoare among his friends. He returned to Pembrokeshire with his wife Eloise in 1793 after inheriting his uncle's estates and mercantile fleet and had a house built at Lower Fishguard; his prosperity now allowed him to indulge in the scholarly pursuits of a gentleman.

While an accomplished poet he is today best remembered for his work of topographical history 'A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire' published in 1810 and 1811 and dedicated to Colt Hoare. In it he describes nine journeys he made on horseback, criss-crossing his native county. His interests were eclectic: genealogy, local history, industry, geology and archaeology. On the latter subject modern readers would be disappointed to learn of his enthusiasm for excavating burial mounds and chambers. At Tavernspite, for example, he blithely records taking a pickaxe to a mound and inadvertently smashing an ancient funerary urn. He also exhibited a particular interest in standing stones and holy wells.

His ninth tour saw him leave Tenby, where he described Paxton's schemes for improving the town, and travel through Sander's Foot (as he described the locality) to Amroth and then north. He noted the coal and iron workings in the area, the remains of Bonville's Castle and notable houses, including Hean Castle whose spelling he deplored, and Cilgetty House, once the minor seat of the Philipps' of Picton Castle.

Fenton died in 1821 and is buried at Manor Owen near Fishguard.

A wealth of illustrations brought to life the journeys of Richard Fenton and our speaker was warmly thanked on behalf of the large audience by Mrs Ann Einon. The next meeting will take place on 20 March at 7.30 in the Regency Hall, Saundersfoot when Pamela Hunt will speak on 'Early 12th Century Flemish Settlements in Pembrokeshire.' Non-members are as ever welcome to attend on the night.