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Bardsey folk

Last updated: 27 November 2005

Ian Jolly introduces us to the residents of the tiny Bardsey Island, past and present.



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"The first photograph of the residents of Bardsey to be taken for some years was taken recently at Preswylwyr.

From left to right: Patrick Murphy (Ty Bach), David Barnden (Ty Pellaf), Ernest Evans (Dynogoch), Adrian George (Assistant Warden - Cristin), Libby Barnden (Ty Pellaf), Emma Bowler and Steve Stansfield (Warden - Cristin) with Connor, Christine Evans (Dynogoch), Gwyneth Murphy (Ty Bach) and Colin Evans (Dynogoch).



For comparison here's a picture taken in 1935 which includes:

Front row: Gwyndon Williams (Nant), Gwynfor Jones (Dynogoch), Dic Jones (Dynogoch), Gwilym Williams (Nant), Myra Jones (Dynogoch), Will Evans (Cristin), John Jones (Dynogoch), Bessie Williams (Carreg), Jane Evans (Ty Pellaf), Gwenda Murray Williams (Ty Capel), ???, Gwyn Murray

Williams (Ty Capel), Will Williams (Carreg).

Middle row: ? of Dynnogoch, Lisi Jones (Dynogoch), Lisi Kate Evans (Cristin), Mother of Lisi Kate Evans (Cristin), Nell Evans (Ty Pellaf), Nell Williams (Carreg), Mrs Murray Williams (Ty Capel), Lisi Jones (Plas Bach) and her sister Ann Jones.

Back row: Will Evans (Ty Pellaf), Will Jones (Dynogoch), Ifan Williams (Carreg), Jack Jones (Plas Bach), John Evans ? (Cristin), Guto Williams (Nant), Will Jones (Dynogoch), Huw Williams (Nant), John Bach (Cristin), Rev Edward Evans and ?

Inset: William Huw Williams and Jane Williams with daughter Mary, all of Nant.

Ernest Evans in the 2005 photo is the son of Will and Nell Evans of Ty Pellaf in the 1935 photo!

Can anyone identify the unknown people?"

your comments

catherine ramsey northampton

Regarding the old photo of the folks on Bardsey:

Front row - Gwynfor, Myra, John, Dic (Richard my father) Jones lived in Rhedyngoch not Dynnogoch.

Middle row - my nain Mary Jones, married to Will Jones (back row) and living in Rhedyngoch, along with my uncle Will Jones, also back row. They all moved to Bardsey but I believe my uncle Gwynfor is the only one to be born on the island. Hoping to get over to the island this summer; my cousin has a new boat and wants to know when we are coming to stay. Talking to him on the phone brought the yearning back so I just had to look at the web site; I need some blissful peace and quiet.

Fri Jun 1 09:09:29 2007

Val Aspden Wigan

Just spent a wonderful two weeks in Carreg Bach. Dave spent his time painting a Buckby can and dipper - he has just been accredited as a journeyman for narrow boat decoration, roses and castles, while I walked, read and did some birdwatching! It was so peaceful and relaxing. Thank you to Gwyneth, Patrick, Dave and Libby for your hospitality and also Adrian who always found time to talk about what birds were on the island and took me on a hunt for the Blythe pippit. No luck, though!! Looking forward to returning next year. Val

Sat Nov 5 21:01:10 2005

Veronica Smith- Hopkins Cape Sable Island ,Nova Sc

Had a nice little chuckle my sister Carlene and I today, when we stumbled upon the group photos of the folks of Bardsey island. It is nice to see that Adrian George has put on a bit of weight, from his own cooking, and from being in home territory. Looking good Ade! What a wonderful island and such history. Carlene and I would like to be there and perhaps, Ade, you could feed me instead of me feeding you. lol. veronica

Wed Jul 6 23:33:17 2005

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Bardsey tales

Last updated: 27 November 2005

Ian Jolly keeps us up to date on the goings-on of the little island - life's never quiet and everyone's kept very busy.



"A vet had to visit the island this Easter to see one of the herd of Welsh Black Cattle. One was expecting a calf, but got into difficulties and the vet had to deliver the calf by caesarean to save the life of the mother.

However the calf survived and has been hand reared and a week later is looking quite healthy. Named Sunshine, it follows you about!



With lambing in full swing, there have been a few lambs rejected by their mothers. All have been fostered out with other ewes except for one - known as 'Marvin - no mates'. He is now three weeks old and is as tame as anything. He even comes when you call his

name! It seems strange to see the calf and lamb 'nuzzling' each other!

Another tiny lamb was born at midday on Good Friday. It was born in a ditch and abandoned by its mother prior to the arrival of its twin. The twin was of normal size (and about three times the size of the poor little abandoned one).

However, Libby Barnden, the farmer's wife, managed to recover the lamb from the state of hypothermia that it was in and by Saturday it was looking a lot better cuddled up with its teddy bear! It was even smaller than the tiny lamb born prematurely last year.

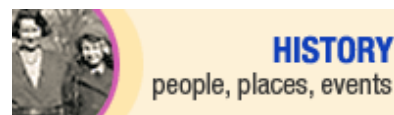


Another recent arrival on the island is a mule - not an animal but a small four wheel drive truck which is proving very useful as an addition to the fleet of the ageing tractors (all two of them).

The mail comes over with Ernest Evans - the island's part-time postman for 32 years! Ernest, a local fisherman, was brought up on the island and spends a good part of the year living there."

Further little update on Bardsey

"The Welsh Black calf 'Sunshine' born just before Easter has



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had to go off the island - suffering from a 'dicky ticker' - so needs to be nearer the vet. Hopefully Sunshine will be back on the island before too long.

The tiny abandoned lamb 'Lennor' born on Good Friday is thriving. Now three weeks old, she is still being bottle fed but is still tiny having grown little in the intervening time. The 'Ahhhh' factor however more than makes up for the lack of size. David Barnden, who farms the island, is thinking of going into production of 'bonsai' lambs!

Still living in the farm kitchen, the lamb curls up at night with the pet dogs!"

- **Bardsey Island photo tour.**

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Last updated: 03 May 2007



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Iolo Williams arrives on Bardsey.

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A Manx Shearwater on Bardsey.

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A seal pops up to view the BBC team.

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Island tales

Last updated: 31 January 2006

How's Marvin no mates and Lenor the tiny lamb doing?
Ian Jolly keeps us informed.

[Click here](#) for island tales from weeks gone by ...

"Just back from a few days on the island and good news - the premature Welsh Black calf, 'Sunshine', that was taken to the mainland with a suspected hole in the heart has made a good recovery.

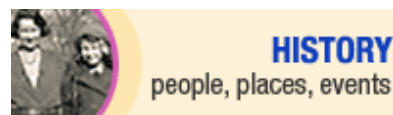
Now nearly four weeks old, she has returned to the island. Still being bottle fed (2 litres at a time three times a day!), she is starting to graze when she is out during the day. She can sometimes be seen following farmer's wife Libby Barnden along the track which runs up the island as Libby visits other residents!

Lenor, the 'bonsai' lamb has made good progress after being found suffering from hypothermia when she was abandoned by her mother when she was born on Good Friday. She has grown little in size - now with a good thick woollen coat, her size has increased little. She's now about the size of a large domestic cat! Compare her size with that of her companion 'Marvin No Mates, another of the orphan lambs.

Volunteers have recently left the island after some maintenance work on the houses. Work has also started on restoration work on the Chapel, the last building erected on the island in 1875. Work will include restoration of the bell tower and in preparation, the bell has been removed - probably for the first time since it was put there in 1875. Some work will be undertaken on the bell which has lost its clapper.

The inscription running around the bell reads 'Bardsey Island Chapel' and around the top 'Mears & Stainbank, Founders, London, 1875'. The company is still in existence as The Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd in East London, located about half a mile equidistant from the Tower of London and the Royal Mint. It is Britain's oldest manufacturing company and has been in production since 1570 (Yes - over 500 years!).

The Bardsey Island Trust has opened a special appeal to help with the restoration of the chapel."



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Bardsey tales

Last updated: 11 April 2006

The usual suspects, Marvin No Mates and Lenor continue to thrive and summer draws an old friend back to the island in search of a mate.



"The only known corncrake in Wales has taken up residence in the garden of Ty Pellaf, the farmhouse at the southern end of the island. This now rare bird is normally only found in the Western Isles of Scotland and in the west of Ireland. There were about 600 to 700 males in Scotland last year and they normally migrate to Africa for the winter and return in mid-April.

This male arrived during mid May and has since been putting out its distinctive 'creek creek' mating call - hoping a female passing on its way to Scotland might stop to sample life on Bardsey!.

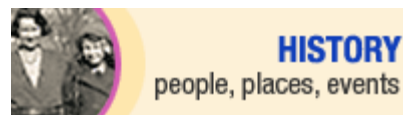
Libby Barnden, who lives in Ty Pellaf said that it spends most of the night calling! We could hear it calling whilst we were recording the interviews at Ty Pellaf yesterday but every time the producer tried to specifically record the call, it stopped! However Steve Stansfield, the Warden at the Bardsey Bird and Field Observatory did manage to get a recording.

This is the second year it has been on Bardsey. Steve has analysed the recordings made last year with those of this year and he is convinced that it is the same bird. Hopefully a passing female may take pity on this corncrake and decide to stop and who knows what the result will be!

Listen to the call of the corncrake...

'Sunshine', the Welsh Black calf born earlier this year is off the island again. This time she tried eating a large chunk of swede whole which got stuck inside her. She was taken off the island and could have ended up as a specimen at the Liverpool Veterinary College but with their assistance over the telephone and a piece of hosepipe (the mind boggles!), Sunshine was persuaded to cough up the offending lump of swede and she is now recovering on the mainland. David Barnden the farmer at Ty Pellaf on Bardsey, is now wondering if she isn't actually a large cat that has just used up the third of her nine lives!

The mother of another small lamb which had been abandoned has been found. Nothing more than skin and bone with protruding eyes, it



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was christened 'Scary Mary' (only to discover that 'she' was in fact a 'he!'). Not having been hand reared, the lamb was very timid but is slowly, with some TLC from the farmer's wife and others, getting used to being hand reared. He is now putting on weight and looking a lot better. He lives in the garden at the farmhouse.



weithredwr

Marvin No Mates continues to grow whilst Lenor (the 'bonsai' lamb) has grown a little but is still tiny compared with the other lambs. They are both still very tame and are a 'hit' with visitors as they come running when they spot anyone passing by.



I went over to Enlli for the day to help record a programme for Radio Wales about the coming of the telephone to Bardsey Island, due to go out at the end of June.

It is the second of two programmes about telephones!

The first includes memories of Porthmadog's GPO switchboard (some of which I own and which was used in the BBC's period drama series 'The Hello Girls' in 1996.)"

Tales gone by:

- **Spring time on Bardsey**
- **Easter on the island**

your comments



Linda Jones, Wrexham

Now I know what kept me awake all summer two years ago. All is forgiven. I feel very privileged to be able to say that I have heard the call of the corncrake. It must have chosen a very perculiar site in which to nest in - the direction of calls seemed to emanate for a stretch of land approximately ten feet wide (and some forty or fifty feet long) between the road leading from the street where I live and the nearby train station. This land is enclosed on either side by high fences which means it is completely undisturbed.

Thu May 31 09:01:10 2007

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Bardsey tales

Last updated: 27 November 2005

For the first time in 80 years all the residents get together for a photo and a new animal joins Sunshine, Scary Mary and friends.



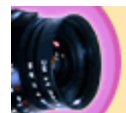
"Sunshine the calf with nine lives is back on Enlli having used up three of her lives! Still as tame as ever she has grown little in the nearly four months since she was born.

Another new arrival is 'How Now' - not quite a Brown Cow but a Jersey milking cow who now provides the residents with excellent creamy milk. The downside is that the goats who have previously provided the milk may be leaving.



'Scary Mary' the abandoned lamb continues to improve but has lost most of his wool resulting in a rather unusual look! No, nothing to do with all the new 'hair dos' that island residents are now sporting! Recently some visitors were stuck on the island for a couple of extra days due to adverse weather. The residents discovered that one of the visitors ran their own hair salon! A bit of quick bartering with milk and eggs and fresh bread and hey presto new look islanders!"

- **Bardsey residents past and present line up for photos**
- **Hear the call of the corncrake**
- **Spring time on Bardsey**
- **Easter on the island**



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Wildlife haven

Last updated: 03 May 2007

The BBC wildlife expert Iolo Williams visited Bardsey on the tip of the Llyn Peninsula recently to record a programme - here we highlight the island's abundant birds and animals.



From March to November, humans aren't the only ones to visit Bardsey. Each year, thousands of birds pass through on their way to their breeding or wintering grounds.

The Bird Observatory Warden and his team of willing volunteers net and ring up to 8,000 of these birds every year in order to understand their migration patterns. Chiffchaffs, goldcrests and wheatears are usually the first to pass through, followed by sedge and willow warblers, whitethroats and spotted flycatchers.

Not all birds use the island merely to refuel. About 30 species regularly nest here, including ravens, little owls, oystercatchers and the rare chough. Hundreds of sea birds, such as razorbills, guillemots, fulmars and kittiwakes spend the summer nesting on the island's eastern cliffs. The numbers reflect the fact that there are no land predators such as rats or foxes to worry about.

On a dark moonless night an eerie cackling can be heard across the island as 16,000 pairs of manx shearwaters come ashore to lay and incubate their eggs in abandoned rabbit warrens or newly-dug burrows. Wales is home to over half the world's population of these birds, with Skomer and Skokholm also having large numbers.

Each winter and spring these birds fly an amazing 12,000km to and from their wintering grounds in South America. Their physical capabilities are not so strong on land, however, and they shuffle clumsily along the ground on their bellies. If you get the chance to accompany the wardens when they're ringing them, be sure to watch your feet!

Some of Bardsey's inhabitants are more at home in the water than on land. The island is one of the best places in north Wales to see grey seals. In mid summer over 200 can be spotted, sunbathing on the rocks or bobbing about in the sea, and about 15 pups are born each autumn. Their sharp teeth and strong jaws are perfect for breaking the shells of lobsters and crabs which dwell in the waters.

On a boat trip around the island you may also spot bottlenose and Risso's dolphins, and porpoises. Bardsey Island is known in Welsh as Ynys Enlli, which means the "isle



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of the currents". These currents are responsible for flushing in food-rich waters: the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society have been carrying out surveys since 1999 to find out which areas are particularly important for feeding and nursing calves.

Go on a photo-tour of the island with Iolo Williams.



Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd
gwledig, camwch dros
drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf

hanesyddol yr ardal

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Island poet

Last updated: 07 September 2006

What's a Yorkshire girl doing on the island nearly all year round? **Christine Evans** lets us in on the secrets of island life and how it's inspired her to write poetry.



I was brought up in the West Riding of Yorkshire, near Halifax - real Brontë country, up on the moors. But my father was born and brought up in Pwllheli and I've just recently found out that my grandmother was also brought up there.

I did know a little Welsh before I came - well, three words my grandmother used to say - 'gwely' (bed), 'cariad' (love) and 'cysgu' (sleep). I have learnt Welsh since - well, I definitely understand what people are saying, even if I do sometimes answer in English. I've just begun to really read in Welsh, though I don't write in Welsh yet.

I hadn't been to Pwllheli until my father died. At that time, I had two younger siblings and a mother who was ill, so I felt it was my responsibility to take care of the family. My mother saw an ad for a teacher Pwllheli and I applied just to please her, and because it was where daddy was from - but I was very surprised when I got the job.

Pwllheli seemed very small - it was at least two or three years behind in things like fashion, and the children were so much more polite and respectful than those in North London. The parents in Wales have a greater interest and respect for education, and I was hailed as 'the English teacher from London' - very dramatic!

I only intended to stay for a couple of years. I had a place as a volunteer overseas, but put it on hold for two years to help my family. By the time I should have taken up that job, I was married.

I'd visited Bardsey Island and met my husband, Ernest Evans, the son of a farmer. He's able to trace his family on the island back to 1770 - he was the last child to be educated in the island's school. His father was Wil Evans, or Wil Ty Pella. Ernest is a fisherman and boat builder, as is our son Colin.

I've lived in Aberdaron or on Bardsey ever since, although I've never spent a whole year on the island. For my husband especially, the idea of living without central heating, television, running water and a telephone during the winter isn't good! Even now, we have to either walk up to the top of the highest hill to get a signal or access a mobile phone from the mobile unit up on the mountain, with a long cable coming down to the house.

We get our energy from generators connected to solar power - so if it isn't sunny, we might run out. We're hoping to get wind-powered generators, but that would need planning permission.



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LLEOL I MI

Gogledd Orllewin

NEWYDDION LLEOL



- Sardinia: Cymry yn 'ddiogel'

- Pontio: Dim prif weithredwr

We don't yet have email on the island either - does anyone out there have any ideas how we could do it? It would be great to get broadband, especially for the four-year-old son of the bird warden. We don't have a complete or constant power supply or a reliable telephone line, but we'd love internet access!

You have to be very organised to live on the island. I've got quite a productive vegetable garden and there is a farm on the island, but we don't do things like make our own butter like Ernest's mother used to.

You have to do a big shop for things like tea, coffee, sugar, orange juice, although things have got easier these days with things in big packs and dehydrated goods.

We have been caught out by the weather a lot. The first time it happened in the 1960s, the only means of communicating with the mainland was via the lighthouse, when it used to be manned. You had to send telegrams over the radio telegraph - I never lived it down when I had to send a telegram to school twice because I was delayed. I don't think they minded too much and the pupils thought it was great.



We always leave about the end of October when the fishing season comes to an end, and go to our house at Uwch Mynydd, Aberdaron. We have to come back to the mainland for our winter jobs - I used to do a bit of teaching in the winter, although I've retired now. I do poetry

readings and creative writing classes though.

Aberdaron in the winter is quieter than being on the island during the summer. There are seven farms or cottages on the island for visitors and some people return every year. As they're on holiday, they always pop in for a tea or some elderflower cordial ,so it's very busy. It's like having an extended family.

How Bardsey inspires poetry...

your comments

Havvrone Rhodri from Saskatchewan,Canada.

loved your poem,so true about Bardsey I think.I always wanted to live there if only for a few days,-you are so lucky. Maybe next summer I shall make it,would like my dream wishes to become reality.I envy you the loneliness, the sheep,the rocks, the storms. Yes, Ynys Enlli, you have my thoughts even though I cannot live there, maybe in another life to come.

Tue Sep 19 11:42:56 2006

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Bardsey poet

Last updated: 07 September 2006

I've had a few volumes of poetry published, especially about Bardsey. I've always scribbled things from when I was a child but I didn't think about publishing until I had maternity leave after my son was born. I'd been teaching for ten years, and suddenly I seemed to have all this time on my hands - it didn't occur to me it was a major change in my personal life.



I suddenly needed to say things which I wanted to be made public and succeeded in getting some of my work published in magazines. I'd also met the poet RS Thomas, our vicar in Aberdaron. He came to Bardsey as a friend of my father-in-law and we talked about poetry.

He told me that I'd never be able to write because I wouldn't have the time and that young women tended to write about the same sort of things, not very original. He may have said this deliberately, but it challenged me - so the first poem I published was addressed to him, though without actually naming him. It was about how I was determined to say something about washing nappies, helping out with the lambing on our smallholding, and that those were good enough subjects for poetry.

I'm really inspired by where I live and our neighbours, both in Uwch Mynydd and Bardsey. RS Thomas always seemed to make country life sound so gloomy and hard but I wanted to celebrate it.

At the moment I'm involved in writing a book about the island, trying to tell the stories of its history through the landscape. I'm working with a photographer called Wolf Marloh from London who has known the island for many years. We hope it'll be out in 2007.

Here's one of my poems about the journey to the island:

Enlli

We get to it through troughs and rainbows
falling and flying

rocked in an eggshell
over drowned mountain ranges.

The island swings towards us, slowly.

We slide in on an oiled keel.



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Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd
gwledig, camwch dros
drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf
hanesyddol yr ardal

Step ashore with birth-wet, wind-red faces
wiping the salt from our eyes
and notice sudden, welling
quiet, and how here the breeze
lets smells of growing things
settle and grow warm, a host of presences
drowsing, too fine-winged to see.

A green track, lined with meadowsweet.
Stone houses, ramparts to the weather.
Small fields that run all one way
to the sea, inviting feet
to make new paths to their own
discovered places...

After supper, lamplight
soft as the sheen of buttercups
and candle-shadow blossoming
bold on the bedroom wall.

Outside's a swirl of black and silver.
The lighthouse swings its white bird round
as if one day it will let go
the string, and let
the loosed light fly
back to its roost with the calling stars.

A poem from the book *Island Of Dark Horses*

[Back to previous page.](#)

your comments

Richard Griffiths from North Devon

Christine Birch, if you go to the Amazon website you'll find several used copies of *Island of Dark Horses* for sale.
Wed Jun 11 16:51:06 2008

Christine Birch - Llanrhychwyn - Conwy Valley

I have been trying to find a copy of the poetry book '*Island of Dark Horses*' Is it out of print. Would appreciate some information.
Fri Feb 15 10:32:56 2008

Christine Evans Burlington Vermont USA

Your poem is lovely, and your island makes me yearn to find my roots in Wales. Do all Welsh people love language and music?
Wed Jan 24 11:06:38 2007

Val Aspden Wigan

Really enjoyed your poem Christine. It really brought back memories of our crossings over the last two years. We are looking forward to visiting the island again in just over a week's time. I do hope you will let us know on the site when your book is published.
Fri Oct 6 09:36:30 2006

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Last boy born on the island

Last updated: 29 June 2007

Lloyd Jones meets Robert Williams who believes he was the last man to have been born on Bardsey Island.



Robert Williams was the last man to be born on Bardsey.

This year he and his wife Doris will celebrate 50 years of married life with a trip to the island, if all goes well. He's nearly blind now, and sadly he will only get a partial view of his old home.

Aged 77 and living in Wrexham, he was brought into the world on a stormy night - with his father as midwife. Women were normally taken to Aberdaron on the mainland before the birth, but heavy storms kept his mother Jane on the island.

A neighbour from Carreg Farm was enlisted to serve as midwife, but the occasion proved too much for her - so Bob's father William Hugh came to the rescue as the storm raged around them.

Although he now lives on the other side of Wales, near the English border, he still feels half-rooted in his old home. To accentuate this duality, he's known as Gwyndon in Llyn, while in Wrexham he's called Bob.



He was born in 1929 at Nant Farm, one of five children. He remembers playing happily for hours with his siblings - Gwilym, Hugh, Guto and Mary. They'd play in the fields or along the shore, collecting firewood or helping their parents with the churning.

One of his chores was to run along to Mrs Murray Williams the schoolteacher, where he'd collect the weather forecast scrawled on a piece of paper after she'd listened to it on the radio - the only one on the island.

"We were very happy - it was an ideal place for children because we didn't know any other sort of life, though it must have been terrible for teenagers," says Bob.

He has few memories of those times. He remembers a pianola at the school, and the skin of a huge snake on the classroom wall.



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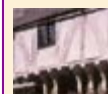
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LEOL I MI **Gogledd Orllewin**



Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd gwledig, camwch dros drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf hanesyddol yr ardal

"It must have been an anaconda or something because there were no snakes on the island," he says. There were no rats either - but there were mice, and they were extra large, he seems to remember.

He recalls saying Bible verses in chapel with the grown-ups towering above him and the minister looming like a giant in the pulpit. There was no established home for the minister - he went from hearth to hearth, sleeping where there was a bed for him.

There were three lighthousemen, says Bob, and they gave all the children a gift at Christmas.

But life on the island was very harsh and took a heavy toll on its occupants, who eked out a living by farming and fishing.

The story continues.

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Last boy born

Last updated: 29 June 2007

Continued from [previous page](#).

A year or two before the second world war, when Bob was about eight, they left the island for good, taking all their animals with them on the boat.



The shadow of the first world war had continued to loom over them, and with the threat of another war the Bardsey people decided that enough was enough. They nearly all left at that time.

The Williams family rented a farm, Aberfawr, at Llaniestyn on the Llyn but tragedy struck almost immediately - Bob's father died in 1938 at the age of 42.

"He'd worked himself to death," says Bob, adding: "We were extremely poor after that."

Almost destitute, the family lived in a small cottage - Ty'n Ffrwd - at Dinas on the slopes of Garn Fadryn, but Jane their mother became very ill with Parkinson's Disease and they were forced to move around, lodging with their nain (grandmother) at Aberdaron, then at Sarn.

Two of the boys went off to war, while the girl, Mary, was forced to leave school at 14 to look after her ailing mother.

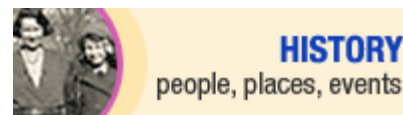
Bob did his National Service and then moved to Wrexham, where he found work as a labourer. After marrying Doris he settled down in Isycoed and worked on a farm before moving to Pentremaelwr by the industrial estate in 1969. They have five children: Sian, Lynn, Paul, Glyn and Mari.

Bob has returned to Bardsey three times: in the 1970s with HTV, aboard a helicopter, to make a documentary, and twice since then with his wife, who also loves the place.

They hope to return again this year, to mark their anniversary. Bob suspects that a woman born after him at Bardsey - and possibly called Meira - also lives in Wrexham.

His face breaks into a smile whenever he mentions the island. "I talk about Bardsey all the time, but you can't go back into the past, can you," he says. "There's something special about the place in January and February, when it's dark and lonely."

Bob has requested his ashes to be scattered on Bardsey.



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Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd gwledig, camwch dros drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf hanesyddol yr ardal

By Lloyd Jones

[Previous page.](#)

your comments

karen abbott Old Colwyn

A very touching story Mr Jones.....it has been many years since i have been down to Aberdaron and seen Bardsey. When seeing it for the first time as a young child i remember telling my mum and dad that i would like to live there.

Wed Apr 2 09:50:36 2008

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Lis Hesketh from Lancaster submitted this photo of a misty morning on Bardsey.

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◀ Leaving Bardsey, submitted by Trish Davies of Criccieth. ▶

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This view across the sea towards Bardsey Island was taken by Tomos Llywelyn Ellis of Aberdaron during a particularly high tide at Aberdaron.

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Saving St Hywyn's

Last updated: 03 April 2006

Evelyn Davies could do nothing but obey her strong feelings that she had to come to Aberdaron - and it's a good thing for the 'old temple' that she did.



My husband was Vicar of Pennant Melangell church at Llangynog, which dates back to the 12th century and is well-known across the world. I set up a cancer help centre and a ministry of healing and reconciliation there and, after my husband died, became vicar of Pennant Melangell in his place. I owned a little house there and I thought I would stay forever.

But I kept on having very strong feelings that I should go to Aberdaron. I had been there before, but only as a visitor and had no plans to leave Llangynog. I spoke to Andrew Jones, the Rector of Llanbedrog and told him about this strong sense that I should move, against my will really, and live in a small village right at the tip of Pen Llyn. I was hoping he'd say - 'don't be ridiculous, you're old, the feelings will pass' - but he didn't. He spoke to the bishop and I was given the living of Aberdaron.



St Hywyn's is right on the beach. It was the last stop for pilgrims before Bardsey Island and it's in two halves. One dates back to 1137 and the other to an extension in 1400. It was the largest church on Pen Llyn and was known as the 'Cathedral of Pen Llyn'.

It was abandoned in the 1900s when the locals decided to build a new church up in the village. But it was so awful they returned on July 9 1906.

As soon as I moved here I was immediately very worried about St Hywyn's - I could see it needed major restoration. But we got on with developing Aberdaron and the church as a place of pilgrimage and began again to use a house on Bardsey as a place of retreat. We held exhibitions in the church and had services every day and more and more pilgrims began to come.

In 2004 we had 20,000 people come through the church. It was obvious that it was a growing ministry and the local congregation began to respond. They set up a lay team to help do something about the building as things were getting worse and worse.



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people, places, events

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At first we thought the total cost would be £100,000, but it's turned out to be a vast project. A quarter of the work has been repairing previous restoration work and costs have risen to £250,000.



- Sardinia: Cymry yn 'ddiogel'
- Pontio: Dim prif weithredwr

We're still fund-raising to reach the target - I'm like a detective, hunting out people to give us money. We appeared on *A Passion for Churches* on BBC Two last year and, though it wasn't about fund-raising, we received £50,000 in donations from the viewers - they came from all over, Gibraltar, Germany, Spain - and very many from Scotland and Cornwall. It was such a help.

We employed wonderful builders to help us. Young local men have been trained in new skills, such as finishing lime mortar - it was always our aim that the community would benefit in this way.



We began the work in September 2005 and we will be open again from July 2006. It's been an amazing project and has brought my congregation together as an excellent team, serving the needs of the pilgrims, visitors and the local community.

I've worked with the Church in Wales for over 40 years, but this parish is the dearest to my heart. It's a small community facing the wind and the waves and they are a good people and I love them dearly. They've been so supportive, whether members of the church or not.

We can now continue to offer day retreats where pilgrims come to Aberdaron, take part in a morning service before going over to Bardsey Island for the day. If the weather isn't great we've devised a tour of six out-of-the-way churches on Pen Llyn.

The poet R S Thomas used to be the vicar here, so we run retreat days connected with his poetry and rector Andrew Jones runs days on the history of pilgrimage and Pen Llyn's many saints.

We're so busy from nine in the morning, when we open for morning prayers, to six in the evening. We run a shop, hold lectures and exhibitions so visitors can come and learn something about Aberdaron's history. It's a great place to come on a wet afternoon during the summer when we have harp recitals and concerts.

your comments

Lynne, Vancouver, B.C., Canada

This is a wonderful, heart-warming story. Effort and intent fell beautifully into place, showing the restoration was obviously meant to happen. Proof positive that one should always listen to the inner voice.

Wed Apr 5 21:54:25 2006

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