

Our 2010 Vacation in Wales

We arrived in Holyhead, Wales by fast catamaran ferry from Dublin, a 2-hour trip, on Midsummer Day, Monday, June 21. Our first sighting of Wales was the lighthouse at South Stack, the tiny island separated by about a 60-foot wide deep ocean channel. We were going to Drwys y Coed, the B&B of friends Tom and Jane Bown (and the best in the world). It was so good to see them. We'd met when we (me, Ruth, and then 7-year-old Mathilda) stayed at a few days at their B&B at the end of one of my business trips in 1984. Although they'd done B&B for years we were their first ever American guests. Mathilda loved the farm and played with their boys, spanning her age, and rode around on Mandy the family's pony and played in a maze of hay bales while Ruth and I explored the island of Anglesey. Their daughter Carol visited us in Massachusetts in 1987 and I visited the farm again alone in 2003 preceding a business trip. Grown now, Carol has three children with husband Derwyn and lives nearby where he owns a fuel oil company; she teaches. Tom & Jane's son Emlyn & his wife Nia live in a house adjacent on the farm and have a little girl; they farm. Son William, their youngest, and his wife Leah have two children, also farm, and live nearby. They were away in Europe during our visit. Son Brian and his wife Nia (there are two Nias) live on an adjacent B&B farm and have five daughters. We visited them and their eldest daughter's 14 Jack Russell Terrier puppies from two litters at Tre Wyn, their farm B&B. We had a really nice dinner at that night Lastra Farm Hotel/restaurant in nearby Amlwch.

We had one of Jane's fabulous breakfasts (as we did every day) the morning of Tuesday, June 22 and then took a walk around Drwys y Coed farm. We bet Bob, a workman making a new stone fence. We saw a pond the Tom & Emlyn made for Jane by damming a small stream, and there we saw ducks, a great blue heron, rabbits and hares. Then we went to see a heritage site featuring an operating windmill.

On Wednesday, June 23 I arose early to help Tom and Meg the sheepdog select lambs for market or to be sent to pasture to fatten. Then we went to Parys Mountain Copper Mine Park, Amlwch Harbour and Ship Museum, Llaneilian, where the lighthouse is for sale. We took Tom & Jane out to dinner that night at Tre-Ysgawen Hall Hotel and Spa, a place where they'd taken me in 2003.

We drove to Beaumaris, the only castle in Anglesey on Thursday, June 24. It was started but left unfinished by Edward I. We had a nice lunch in the pretty town of Beaumaris too. Then we drove to Penmon Point where we saw the Abby, the ancient Dovecot, St. Seiriol's Well, the lighthouse and Puffin Island. We also took in the Menai Strait and Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlantysiliogogoch, the world's longest-named town, which is on the Menai shore on Anglesey. Then we had a fine dinner at the Ship's Inn on Red Wharf Bay.

We drove back to Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlantysiliogogoch on Friday, June 25 so that Ruth could make a purchase at a needlecraft shop. Then we crossed the Menai to tour Caernarfon Castle, where Princes of Wales are invested. (In the town while we had our lunch we saw two black miniature schnauzers.) Then we drove on to the village of Beddgelert, a lovely Snowdonia village with the hero dog's grave. We took a lovely drive through Llanberis Pass to return to Anglesey. We had our dinner with Carol and Derwyn, Brian and Nia and their high-school age children at The Quay on

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Caffir Bae followed by a visit to Carol and Derwyn's house and a look at his antique car collection.

On Saturday, June 26 we crossed the Menai again and drove through Caernarfon to Portmerion, which is not a town but rather the name of a “folly” built on an estate. It’s Italianate in appearance and instantly recognizable to fans of the old TV Series *The Prisoner* as the location. We had lunch there and then went on to see Llechwedd Slate Caverns and antique mining village, Betws y Coed and the famed “Ugly House” serving as HQ for Snowdonia National Park (which we drove through), and Thomas Telford’s Menai Suspension Bridge. We had a Chinese dinner that night at The Jade.

Sunday June 27 was to be our last full day in Wales. We were already sad about having to leave the next day. We started out to walk from Drwys y Coed to Mynydd Bodafon, the highest point on the island of Anglesey but managed to get lost, so we walked back and drive there. We had lunch on the peak and then fed waterfowl at the lake below. Tom & Jane took us out that night for a memorably lovely dinner and then we chatted for a while back in their living room.

On Monday, June 28 we had a nice talk with Jane after breakfast and then lunch with her, Tom & Emlyn before saying sad, fond farewells. Then we drove to the Holyhead Ferry via South Stack to see puffins and the lighthouse.