



# “Land of my Fathers”

## *A Tour of Wales*

12 days

May 12<sup>th</sup> – May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012



Ystwyth Valley

I'm very pleased to offer once more our ever popular 'Land of my Fathers' tour which I have planned this year for a late May departure. Springtime in Wales is one of the prettiest seasons with the countryside beginning to bloom with colours and coming alive with the sights and sounds of new born animals and warming temperatures.

Our 2012 tour includes many new places to visit including more gardens; the Hidden Garden on the island of Anglesey is a wonderful discovery as is the Physic Garden in Cowbridge. Jen Jones' quilt centre is another exciting discovery as is Rhiannon's 'Welsh Gold Centre' in the remote town of Tregaron.

As previous participants will vouch, this is not a fleeting glimpse of the popular tourist destination, but

a real in-depth look at Wales. You will adore meeting the people, enjoy travelling through well-kept countryside, visit picturesque villages, small market towns, and fine gardens. Our medieval castles rank amongst the best in Europe and our collection of National Trust properties are amongst the very best in Britain.

You are certain to enjoy the hotels we've selected, 'Can y Bae' is an award winning boutique hotel overlooking Llandudno's sea-front promenade. 'The Conrah' is a Country House hotel set in 18 acres of beautiful countryside on the outskirts of Aberystwyth and 'The Parc' Hotel is a grand Victorian building right in the heart of our capital city. To enhance your experience, we have also engaged the services of expert guides to lead us at some of the attractions.

The itinerary for each day is clearly set out, and the pace will be relaxed and unhurried with plenty of opportunities to gain a genuine insight into the local culture and taste the delicious regional cuisine.

Again, I will personally be leading this tour and as always look forward to sharing the delights and charms of this land, the 'Land of my Fathers' with you.

Warmest regards

Idwal, your guide and companion in Wales

## Day 1 Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup>

Meet your travelling companions and Idwal your guide for a welcoming drink at Can y Bae Hotel at 5.30 followed by dinner.

Dinner and overnight at Can y Bae

## Day 2 Sunday May 13<sup>th</sup>



Bodnant Garden

### Great Orme Country Park and Bodnant Garden

We begin the day with a walk along the promenade to board Britain's last remaining cable operated street tramway which will take us to the Great Orme Country Park from where we get an excellent overview of the town, the ocean and the mountains of Snowdonia in the distance.

We then take a short drive to Bodnant one of the world's spectacular gardens created by four generations of the Aberconwy family assisted by three generations of the 'Puddle' family as their head gardeners. The garden was presented to the National Trust by the Second Lord Aberconwy in 1949.

Dinner and overnight at Can y Bae

## Day 3 Monday May 14<sup>th</sup>

### Slate Museum, Penrhyn Castle (NT), Pub meal, Choir rehearsal

The Slate industry in North Wales was as important to the local economy, culture and history of the area as was the Coal industry of South Wales. In the good times, quarry owners made massive profits from the industry, and the building of the enormous neo-Norman castle at Llandygai by the Pennant family is a fine example of how this wealth was spent. Architect Thomas Hopper supervised the construction between 1820 and 1845 and was passed to the National Trust upon the death of the last Lord Penrhyn in 1948. We now see it fully restored with some of the original fine furniture and precious works of art in place.



Penrhyn Castle

In contrast, in the afternoon a visit to the Slate Museum will tell the story of the industry from the workers perspective. We see a film presentation which illustrates the harsh working conditions, visit the miners, cottages and end our visit with a demonstration by a former miner of how, in earlier times, young boys were taught to 'split and dress' the slate.

After a nice pub meal we make our way to the village of Bethesda to visit the Penrhyn Male Voice Choir at their rehearsal rooms. This well known choir was established towards the end of 19C drawing members from the slate industry. Today the members, aged between 17 and 80 come from many different walks of life

Overnight at Can y Bae

## Day 4 Tuesday May 15<sup>th</sup>



Caernarfon Castle

### The Royal Town of Caernarfon, Hidden Garden and the Isle of Anglesey

We begin the day with a pleasant drive to the Royal Town of Caernarfon. This town's symbolic status was emphasized when King Edward 1 of England installed his wife Eleanor in the unfinished castle in 1284 to ensure that his son, the first English Prince of Wales, was born in Wales. In 1969, the castle gained worldwide fame as the setting for the Investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales. We tour the castle and enjoy some free time before making our way to Anglesey an island off the northern coast of Wales. Your guide will introduce you to many interesting aspects of the island which will include a visit to 'the Hidden Gardens at Cadnant'.

In 1996, Anthony Tavernor bought the 200 acre Plas Cadnant Estate and work began on the restoration of

the historic garden and grounds. Since then large parts of the gardens have undergone a spectacular transformation and have been restored to their former glory. We join Anthony on a walk around his 10 acre garden and end the day with a delicious 'Cream Tea' in the garden's lovely tearoom.

Overnight and dinner at Can y Bae

## Day 5 Wednesday May 16<sup>th</sup>

### Portmeirion and the Historic Talylyn Railway

We journey through the Lledr and Ffestiniog valleys to enjoy a private tour of Portmeirion - the unique 'fantasy village' built between 1925 and 1975 by the late architect Clough Williams-Ellis, alongside the picturesque Dwyryd Estuary. The village was also the setting for the 70's cult TV series "*The Prisoner*" starring the late Patrick McGoohan. After lunch, we will travel to the tiny village of Abergynolwyn to board the Talylyn Railway's narrow-gauge steam train on a journey through glorious countryside to the village of Towyn, where we re-join our mini-coach and continue our journey to Aberystwyth, where we stay for the next 4 nights.



Portmeirion

Overnight and dinner at The Conrah Country House Hotel, Aberystwyth

## Day 6 Thursday May 17<sup>th</sup>



Cliff Railway, Aberystwyth

### Constitution Hill and Ceredigion Museum

Aberystwyth is a seaside holiday resort and administrative centre of the west coast of Wales. It is also home to the University of Wales and the National Library. The town is nestled between three hills and two beaches, and hosts castle ruins, a pier and a harbour. We will have morning at leisure after Idwal has taken you on a familiarisation walk around town. In the afternoon, we take the Cliff Railway to the summit of Constitution Hill 430 feet above the town, a magnificent viewpoint from which you have an unrivalled view of the town and surrounding area. Back at 'sea level' we make our way to the excellent Ceredigion Museum, dedicated to the history of the region and chronicles life in the county from prehistoric times to everyday life today.

Overnight and dinner at The Conrah Country House Hotel, Aberystwyth

## Day 7 Friday May 18<sup>th</sup>

### The Devil's Bridge, Rhiannon Gold, Llanerchaeron (NT), and Fish and Chips

We begin the day with a twelve-mile journey through the spectacular Rheidol valley to Pontarfynach, also known as The Devils' Bridge a small peaceful village famous for its waterfalls and the three bridges, each built one on top the other. The first bridge was built in the 11C by the Devil ...but this legend is for your guide to tell.

The Romans have a unique place in the history of gold; nearly 2000 years ago they mined this precious metal extensively from the mountains near to the small village of Tregaron they are long gone, but we have Rhiannon, a local craftswoman who has been making Welsh gold jewellery for over forty years in her workshop and studio in the village. Rhiannon Welsh Gold is a unique collection of original designs containing this rarest of metals, but there is also a wide selection of silver, bronze and pewter jewellery. We then proceed at a leisurely pace through the beautiful Aeron valley to Llanerchaeron (NT). This is an 18th C Welsh gentry's estate designed and built by John Nash with a large house, walled gardens and home farm. This is a place to relax and enjoy the countryside before travelling the short distance to Aberaeron, a former fishing village where one in every four buildings is listed either as being of special architectural or historical interest. Today it is a quiet seaside resort known for its picturesque sea-front setting, exquisite ice cream and the most amazing 'fish and chips'.

We end the day with a fish supper at Aberaeron before returning to Aberystwyth.

Overnight at 'The Conrah Country House Hotel', Aberystwyth



Signs for Devil's Bridge

## Day 8 Saturday May 19<sup>th</sup>

### Ancient Times – St David's cathedral, St Brynach Church, Hilltop Megalith

St David's Cathedral is considered amongst the holiest sites in Wales and a major pilgrimage destination throughout the Middle Ages and where Dewi Sant (St David's), the patron saint of Wales, established the first monastic community in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. Although it carries the status of 'a City' it's no bigger than a village, with only the central square and a few side streets, but the Cathedral and the remains of the Bishop's Palace just on the edge of the city is an impressive sight, and we'll enjoy a private tour of this ancient site with one of the guides. In contrast, on our return journey, we'll turn into a secluded valley to discover the small 6<sup>th</sup> C church of St Brynach where an avenue of 700 year old yew trees guides us through the churchyard past a stunning 13 foot 11<sup>th</sup> C Celtic cross to the church. Nearby is Pentre Ifan a Bronze-Age burial chamber dating from at least 4000 B.C. It's probably Wales' finest example of a hilltop megalith.



Pembrokeshire Coast

Overnight and dinner at The Conrah Country House Hotel, Aberystwyth

## Day 9 Sunday May 20<sup>th</sup>



National Botanic Garden

### Jen Jones Quilt Centre, Botanical Garden, Tywi Valley and Brecon Beacons

Visitors to Wales cannot escape the fact that we have many sheep, and it comes as no surprise that the wool industry was historically the most important of Wales's industries and our first visit will be to Jen Jones' Quilt Centre. Jen Jones has been buying, selling and collecting Welsh Quilts for more than thirty years, and over that time, she has acquired a deep knowledge and understanding of the art and craft of Welsh Quilt-making. 2009 saw the acquisition of Lampeter Town Hall and its conversion into the Jen Jones Welsh Quilt Centre which opened on 1st August 2009 as a fitting home for her remarkable collection of quilts; we take a full guided tour of the gallery.

After lunch our journey continues to visit to the prestigious National Botanic Garden of Wales, the most visited Garden in Wales, and one of the most fascinating gardens in the UK. It occupies a truly beautiful location on the edge of the Tywi Valley, surrounded by gentle rolling hills, and boasts the largest single span Glasshouse in the world.

Created within a beautiful 568 acre park this landmark visitor attraction combines 200 year-old historical features with spectacular modern architecture and beautiful landscaping all with a collection of some 100,000 different plants, many rare and endangered.

Our journey continues through the Brecon Beacons National Park arriving in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, early evening.

Dinner & overnight Parc Hotel Cardiff

## Day 10 Monday May 21<sup>st</sup>

### St Fan's Folk Museum, Wye Valley and Tintern Abbey

Cardiff is Wales' largest city with a population of around 350,000 and, during Victorian times. It was the biggest coal-exporting town in the world. Since granted Capital City status in 1955, the old coal town has been thoroughly transformed with a series of massive developments, not least the shiny National Assembly Building, the Millennium Centre for the arts, the huge city centre sports stadium and the rejuvenated waterfront with its giant freshwater marina, shops, restaurants, museums and other attractions.

St Fagans is the second most visited open-air museum in Europe, attracting over 600,000 visitors a year. It has become the home of Welsh history - part of the fabric of Welsh identity and place to which many people from Wales and all over the world make a pilgrimage and expect to experience the story of Wales. Here is where we see a collection of interesting buildings that have been moved stone by stone from all around Wales and reconstructed in this 100 acre parkland, with complete period content. (B)



Tintern Abbey

We then continue to the spectacular Wye Valley to marvel at the magnificent remains of the Cistercian Abbey of Tintern, one of the greatest monastic ruins in Britain. It was only the second Cistercian foundation in Britain, and the first in Wales. It was founded in 1131 and prospered with new buildings added and updated in every century until its dissolution in 1536.

### Cardiff

## Day 11 Tuesday May 22<sup>nd</sup>

Today will be largely unplanned as some will want to do some last minute shopping, whilst others might like to see some of the sights. But our day will begin with a short journey to Cowbridge, a picturesque market town situated in the heart of the Vale of Glamorgan. If you like to shop in style then you'll love Cowbridge! One of the most fashionable places to visit in the principality, the high street is home to a number of fashion boutiques and family-owned shops. For those with other interest, a visit to the magnificent Physic Garden is recommended. In the Middle Ages Physic Gardens were associated in particular with monasteries and in gardens close to an infirmary herbs such as rose, lily, cumin, lovage, tansy, mint and rosemary would be grown to treat fevers, aches and pains, and other ailments of the monks and their guests - we think of Brother Cadfael! In the afternoon we return to Cardiff where everyone will have a ticket to board the city's 'hop-on hop-off' open top sightseeing bus. Our day, and indeed our tour, will end with a farewell dinner for us all at 'Y Mochyn Du' a traditional pub specialising in local cuisine and a wide selection of local beers.

### Overnight Cardiff

## Day 12 Wednesday May 23<sup>rd</sup>

Tour ends after breakfast.

### Tour Inclusions:

- Four nights B&B and three dinners at Can y Bae Hotel Llandudno
- Four nights B&B and three dinners at The Conrah Hotel, Aberystwyth
- Three nights B&B and two dinners at Parc Hotel, Cardiff
- A pub dinner
- A Fish supper

- A Cream Tea
- Farewell dinner at 'Y Mochyn Du'
- A comprehensive daily sightseeing tour programme with the following inclusions:-
- Travel on the Great Orme Cablecar Tramway
- Visit Bodnant Garden
- Visit the Hidden Garden of Cadnant
- Visit Physic Garden in Cowbridge
- Visit the Royal Town of Caernarfon and tour its mighty castle
- Visit the Penrhyn Male Voice Choir at rehearsal
- Travel on the Talylyn , narrow gauge railway
- Experience the working conditions of a Victorian slate miner at the Slate Museum
- Visit the magnificent Penrhyn Castle (NT)
- Visit Portmeirion, the 'Fantasy village'
- A Town walk at Aberystwyth
- Visit Llanerchaeron an 18th C estate in the care of The National Trust
- Visit and guided tour of St David's Cathedral
- Visit the St Brynach Church
- Visit Pentre Ifan, Bronze-Age megalithic site
- Visit Wales "new" Botanic Garden
- Visit Jen Jones Quilt Centre, in Lampeter
- Visit The Devil's Bridge
- Visit Rhiannon Welsh Gold Centre
- Visit St Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum
- Visit Tintern Abbey
- Enjoy touring Cardiff on a Hop on – Hop off bus
- Visit and tour Cardiff Castle
- Services of experienced local driver / guide throughout

Price per Person:

£ 1575.00 sharing

Single Supplement:

£ 350.00

Deposit:

£ 100.00 per person at time of booking

Balance:

Due 60 days prior to departure. See our website for terms and conditions.

Our 'Meet and Greet' and transfer services for this tour:

We offer a mid-morning pick up from Manchester city and airport hotels, a sightseeing tour, lunch stop and some visits on route before arriving at the hotel late afternoon. At Cardiff we arrange transfers to the Railway and Bus Stations or otherwise help you with your onward journey.

£120 per person both journeys.

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