

## Welsh "Cruise"

Having sold our yacht, without too much sadness in view of the weather, Rosemary and I decided to do a land cruise this summer to see some of our own country instead of Normandy and Brittany. Accordingly we set off by car for Wales spending our first night on the delightful River Wye stopping at the ruins of Tintern Abbey on the way to Simmonds Yat. Elevenses the next day were spent in the attractive border town of Monmouth. Then, pausing for a ride on the Brecon Mountain Railway, on to The Mumbles, where the wind on the Head was almost too strong to stand up in. How glad we were not to be at sea. The following day, with the Head Gardner aboard, we had to visit the delightful Aberglaseny Gardens near Carmarthen. Here we learned the vagaries of Welsh road signs, all of which are in two languages and having signed you off the main road leave it to your navigator to find your destination. We then went on to St David's which, having a lovely Cathedral has recently been granted the status of "City".



Thanks to the relationship of its owner to a kind neighbour of ours in Langstone we spent that night in a luxurious hotel at Wolfe's Castle which owes its name to the Vikings.

The next day we went to Fishguard from where high speed ferries sail to Rosslare and admired the old harbour occupied by yachts and fishing boats. We had lunch in Cardigan and then went on up the west coast calling at Llangranog, with its memorial garden to Elgar who gained much of his inspiration there, then the resort of New Quay with two drying harbours before spending the night at the delightful harbour town of Aberaeron. Here all the houses are painted in different colours and our B&B held the prize for producing the best breakfast in Wales. The next day we walked round Aberystwyth and found a

16<sup>th</sup> Century farmhouse for the night near Dolgellau where we enjoyed an evening meal and learned that Sospan Bach meant Little Saucepan. A problem with B&Bs is that few serve evening meals and one has to go into the nearest town to dine.

We then headed through the spectacular Pass of Llanberis, with torrents pouring down the slopes each side, for the Snowdon Mountain Railway. Because of the strong winds, driving rain and low cloud base this only took us half way up but it was nevertheless spectacular. We spent the next night in a B&B run by a Dutch couple outside Betts-y-coed. This was remarkable in having an indoor heated swimming pool. We dined well in a pub in town busy with Welsh speaking locals.

The next day we headed east to Wrexham, where I was based at the end of the War. Then to Chester which is a spectacular walled City with a fine Cathedral and the attractive two tier shopping streets known as the Rows. From there we went to Weaverham to visit one of Rosemary's nieces who lives in a well fitted out barge on the River Weaver with her practical husband and three well brought up boys. After this our cruise ended and we headed down south to spend our final night with our younger son and his family. Christopher is a Pastor of an Evangelical Free Church in the Bournville area of Birmingham. Our last passage was in foul weather down the motorways with blinding spray thrown up by heavy lorries to the safe haven of our house in Langstone. All in all it was a most enjoyable "cruise" despite the weather and we visited parts of our country which we had not seen before.

**Peter Thomas**

