

The Journey of Grief



One Special Woman.



In the heart of summer, on the 4th of July in 2015, my world was shattered as I said goodbye to the love of my life, Linda. She had battled a relentless brain tumour with unwavering courage and grace, but in the end, it was a battle that even her incredible spirit couldn't conquer. Her absence left a void in my life, and I found myself navigating the tumultuous seas of grief, unsure of where to anchor my emotions.

For nearly three years, I carried the weight of my loss, wrestling with memories and grappling with the reality of her absence. The pain was a constant companion, and I wondered if I would ever find a way to move forward, to heal.

Then, on a seemingly ordinary day in April 2018, everything changed. It was the 17th of the month, and I was far from home, traveling through the enchanting landscapes of Ireland. As I explored the rolling hills, ancient ruins, and vibrant cities, I stumbled upon something unexpected – a renewed sense of purpose and a connection to life

that I had long thought lost. In the serenity of those moments, I felt Linda's presence, as if she were guiding me towards a new path.

However, life had more challenges in store for all of us in the years to come. The global pandemic of 2020 and its far-reaching consequences forced me to shift my focus once more. With travel restrictions and isolation, I turned my attention to a different journey - researching my family tree. As I delved into the fascinating twists and turns of my lineage, I discovered stories of resilience, love, and triumph, as well as mysteries and surprises that both intrigued and perplexed me.

This is my story – a journey of profound loss, unexpected renewal, and the unearthing of the past. In the pages that follow, I hope to share the highs and lows of my life, the lessons I've learned, and the connections that have sustained me through it all.

The July 4, 2015, a day forever etched in my memory, the clock struck 2 am at the University Hospital of Wales. There, surrounded by my four children, I held my wife Linda's delicate left hand, knowing that the time had come for her to depart from us forever.

In that surreal moment, we watched her silently, unable to hear her gentle breaths, unsure if she had already slipped away. Then, as I clutched her hand, once soft and warm, now cold, and lifeless, I knew that my beloved Linda had lost her battle for life. Never again would we be graced by the sound of her beautiful voice.

At that moment, reality seemed elusive, and the weight of what had just occurred bore heavily upon us. We had imagined that one goes to the hospital, recovers from their illness, and eventually returns home. But when that outcome doesn't materialize, one is left adrift, unsure of what steps to take.

In the first two weeks following Linda's passing, I found myself in a state of quietude and confusion. I was grappling with a sense of uncertainty, and the grief, when it finally hit me, brought forth an overwhelming pain, unlike anything I had ever experienced. It is a pain that defies explanation, one that can only be truly understood by those who have walked the same path.

During my anguish, I found solace in the words Linda had shared with me just before her departure. She told me that I could love again but cautioned against remarriage. We exchanged smiles, and then she uttered the profound words, "You know what you must do now. Go and travel."

Two months later, my daughter, sensing my struggling state, suggested that I have a dog as a companion. And so, Lizzy, a Jug—a delightful mix of Jack Russell and Pug—entered my life. Little did I know then the profound impact she would have, forever changing my trajectory.

Initially, Lizzy and I set off without a clear destination or purpose. We roamed aimlessly, staying at different places for a night before moving on. I was trying to shield myself from the world, creating a cocoon with just me and my dog, avoiding groups and human connection.

This pattern continued until I stumbled upon a group meeting, where I finally encountered fellow travellers who shared my circumstances. It was a turning point in my journey of grief. For the longest time, whenever I spoke about Linda, a wave of tears would overcome me, rendering me unable to control my emotions. But during this gathering, a kind woman reassured me, urging me not to apologize for my tears. She encouraged me to let the pain flow, emphasizing that it was an integral part of my healing process.

Her words shifted my perspective, allowing me to embrace my grief as a necessary step toward finding inner peace. Over nearly two years, I gradually learned to navigate the waves of sorrow, acknowledging that shedding tears for my beloved Linda was not a sign of weakness, but rather a cathartic release of the pain that resided within me.

And so, my journey continued—a journey of grief, healing, and self-discovery. The memory of Linda remained a cherished part of me, and with each tear shed, I grew stronger, inching closer to the peace I sought.

"In life, there is always that special person who shapes who you are, who helps determine the person you become."

Little did I know that from that day you would be such an influence on my life.

Little did I know how you guided me to being a good man without me even knowing it.

Little did I know how big your heart was. Little did I know that I was to lose you so young.

In the year 1981, I stood at the altar, ready to embark on a journey of love and companionship with the woman who would soon become my wife. Little did I know then just how extraordinary she would turn out to be.

Over the course of many years, she weaved her way into the lives of those around her, leaving an indelible mark that would forever shape their paths. Modest and humble, she never recognized her own exceptional qualities, but to me and countless others, she was a shining star, radiating love and warmth.

Her presence will endure in our memories, and her legacy will precede her, as it rightfully should. Linda, the depths of my love for you are immeasurable. It is a love that has only grown stronger with the passing of time.

Losing someone you hold dear is an experience that unveils the true magnitude of your love for them. As the years have unfolded, I have come to understand the depths of my affection for Linda on a profound level. Her absence fuels my determination to carry on, to seek out the inner peace that eludes me.

I am resolute in my pursuit of that serene place, where one day, I will be reunited with my beloved for eternity. There isn't a single day that goes by without me missing her presence, yearning for the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand.

Love, in its truest form, reveals its strength and depth in the face of loss. As time has passed, my love for Linda has only deepened, and I know it will continue to do so. She serves as a guiding force, propelling me forward on this journey to find inner peace.

With every step I take, I am confident that I will uncover that tranquil solace I seek. And when the time is right, our souls will intertwine once more, embarking on an eternal union.

In moments like these, I find myself being too hard on myself. But the love I had for Linda was immeasurable, beyond any quantifiable measure.

I can almost hear her now, playfully telling me to "get a grip, Graham!" Her voice still echoes in my mind, bringing a smile to my face even in the toughest times.

Today, I have come to understand the profound truth that love is the most significant thing in my life. How can one possibly measure something so powerful? Love can both heal and hurt, leaving its mark on our hearts, minds, and souls.

When true love finds its way to your life, it is something to be cherished and held tightly. The chance to experience such a love may never come again. It is a treasure that must be grasped with both hands.

Sometimes in life, we embark on a journey without knowing precisely what we are seeking. Yet, it is in the act of starting that we discover the true essence of the journey itself. We may find ourselves unable to see the bigger picture, caught amidst the intricacies of the present moment. But in those times, we must have faith and believe. We must acknowledge the blessings of who we are and what we have.

Life begins with grand expectations, but it is through learning and making mistakes that we truly grow. Mistakes are the steppingstones to wisdom, and they pave the way for progress. I have made my fair share of mistakes along the way, except for one—I never faltered in loving you. Regrettably, you are no longer by my side.

As I continue this journey called life, I carry the lessons learned from my missteps and the enduring love I hold for you. Your absence is felt deeply, but your love remains a guiding light, inspiring me to persevere and make the most of each day. And while you may be far from sight, I will always seek you among the stars, shining brightly on Christmas night.

Throughout our lives, we encounter numerous individuals, each with their own unique qualities and characteristics. Among them, there are those who stand out, who possess an inexplicable aura that captivates us from the start.

These special people have a way of making us smile, filling our hearts with joy. Their absence leaves us feeling incomplete, as if a part of us is missing. We come to realize that these individuals are our soulmates, the ones we have been searching for. Finding them may happen early in life or may take a lifetime of searching, but rest assured, there is one out there who is meant for each of us.

For me, that person was Linda. She was the one who touched my soul and ignited a flame within me. Her presence brought immense happiness and a sense of completeness that I had never experienced before. Linda was my soulmate, the one I had been longing for all along.

The connection we shared was beyond words, and the love we had for each other was profound. Linda filled my life with warmth, laughter, and an overwhelming sense of belonging. Her absence is deeply felt, and the void she left behind serves as a constant reminder of the love we shared.

In this vast journey of life, it is a true blessing to find that one person who completes us. Linda was that person for me, and I will forever cherish the time we had together. She will always hold a special place in my heart, for she was not just a person I met along the way, but my soulmate, my love, and my everything.

Grief has a way of stripping away the superficial layers and revealing the core of who we truly are. It has the power to shape our perspective and redefine our understanding of home.

For Linda, the concept of home extended far beyond the physical confines of a house. It transcended the walls and the address. To her, home was wherever we

found ourselves together. Throughout our married life, we embarked on various relocations, but it was never the structure or the location that held the essence of home for us.

I can vividly recall the words she spoke to me, expressing her unwavering devotion. She said, "I don't care if we have nothing more than a humble caravan to call our own, as long as I am by your side." Her words resonated deeply within me, for they revealed the depth of her love and the true meaning of home.

Our hearts became the compass that guided us. If we were together, we felt a sense of belonging and warmth that no physical dwelling could ever replicate. It was in each other's presence that we discovered a sense of security, comfort, and true fulfilment.

Even in her absence, Linda's spirit continues to remind me of the importance of cherishing the moments we shared and the unconditional love we embraced. Home, for us, will forever reflect the love we cultivated and the bond we nurtured.

Grief may have altered our lives, but it has also illuminated the essence of our connection. It has shown me the depth of my love and the resilience of my spirit. Through the journey of grief, I have come to understand that home is not confined to a physical space but resides within the heart, forever intertwined with the love we shared.

In honouring Linda's memory, I carry the knowledge that home will always be wherever our hearts reside, united in a love that transcends time and space.

Have you ever experienced a moment in your life that seemed ordinary at the time, unaware of its significance? It is often in hindsight, after that person is no longer with us, that we come to understand just how precious and extraordinary that moment truly was.

During our daily routines, we may overlook the magic unfolding around us. It is when the person who played a significant role in that moment is gone forever that we grasp the magnitude of its impact. We begin to appreciate the depth of its importance and the profound effect it had on our lives.

That single moment, seemingly insignificant at first, has the power to shape our entire existence. It becomes a cherished memory, etched in our hearts for a lifetime. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been a part of such a transformative experience when fate introduced me to a living angel.

In the presence of this extraordinary individual, I witnessed something truly remarkable. Their essence, their spirit, radiated a sense of divinity. They brought light, love, and inspiration into my life. They guided me through challenges and celebrated my triumphs. Little did I know that this encounter would forever change the course of my journey.

As time passes and the absence of this special person lingers, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude. I now understand the immense impact they had on my life, and I hold that moment dear to my heart. It serves as a reminder of the beauty and significance that can be found within the simplest of interactions.

In my eyes, this person is not merely a human being; they are a living angel. Their presence, even if fleeting, has left an indelible mark on my soul. I will forever carry the memory of that transformative moment, cherishing it as a testament to the power of connection and the profound influence one person can have on our lives.

I believe that these encounters are gifts from a higher power, reminding us of the extraordinary nature of the human experience. They serve as reminders to cherish every interaction, to embrace the present moment, and to recognize the divine in those we encounter along our journey.

As I sit here, sipping my cup of tea, my mind drifts back to the past eight years and the profound changes that have shaped my life. It all began when I made the decision to have a custom camper van built, embarking on a journey of travel and self-discovery. Little did I know that this journey would also introduce me to my beloved companion, Lizzy, a delightful Jug—a mix of Jack Russell and Pug.

Initially, I underestimated the challenges that came with owning a camper van. I quickly realized that I was clueless about camping with such a vehicle. One dilemma stood out: how on earth was I supposed to maintain and service the van's toilet? It may sound funny now, but at the time, I felt too embarrassed to ask for help. Thankfully, a quick search on YouTube provided the answers I needed, saving me from any potential mishaps.

With a "suck it and see" mentality, I embarked on my camper van adventures, learning along the way. In that first year, I discovered that I had been carrying unnecessary baggage, both physically and metaphorically. It became evident that my life lacked structure, as I wandered aimlessly from one place to another without truly immersing myself in the beauty and experiences each destination had to offer.

A turning point arrived when Lizzy and I bid farewell to Wales, setting off on a journey with no predetermined destination in mind. We simply drove, hoping that somehow the path would reveal itself. At times, I couldn't help but chastise myself,

urging the need for a plan. But the truth is, grief had cast a shadow over me, leaving me feeling lost and unsure of how to navigate my way forward. Each day became a tentative step, a "suck it and see" approach, hoping that life would unfold before me.

Grief has a way of altering our perspective and leaving us adrift within ourselves. It's a disorienting feeling, not knowing how we'll emerge from its grasp. That's why, during this phase, each day became a blank canvas, awaiting the unpredictable brushstrokes of life.

Yet, amidst the uncertainty, there was a glimmer of hope. With each passing day, I slowly discovered a newfound resilience within myself. I began to chart a course toward healing and self-discovery. Although I didn't have a concrete plan, I allowed life to unfold organically, embracing the unknown and the unexpected.

As I continue my journey, I've come to understand that sometimes the most profound transformations arise from the unplanned moments. Life's uncertainties can lead us down uncharted paths, pushing us to grow and evolve in ways we never anticipated. And so, with a cup of tea in hand and Lizzy by my side, I embrace the unpredictable, knowing that within the uncertainty lies the potential for extraordinary experiences and profound personal growth.

The day I married an Angel.

On the 10th of October 1981, little did I know that I was about to marry an extraordinary woman—a woman who would shape my life and fill it with immense joy for the next 34 years. Looking back, I am grateful for the incredible journey we shared together.

Throughout our years together, she transformed me into the man I am today. Her love, support, and guidance moulded me into a better person, teaching me valuable lessons and helping me grow in countless ways. Together, we built a beautiful family, and under her nurturing care, our children have blossomed into exceptional individuals and loving parents themselves.

Her zest for life was boundless, and her compassion towards others was immeasurable. Those who were fortunate enough to be touched by her knew first-hand the magic she possessed. Today, as I celebrate our anniversary, I do so with profound pride and love, knowing that the pain I feel in her absence is a testament to the depth of love we shared.

Though she may no longer be physically present, I find solace in the knowledge that her soul rests comfortably within the depths of my heart. Her memory will forever be cherished, and I carry her with me each day until the moment when we are reunited once again.

Over the past few years, I have come to understand the true meaning of love and marriage, albeit through the painful experience of losing the woman I held dear. It is a journey that begins when you meet your partner and spend those initial years building a foundation for your relationship. However, it is only when you take the step to get married that you begin to comprehend the depth of commitment and responsibility involved.

Marriage brings with it a unique set of challenges. Financial struggles often arise, and you may find yourselves starting a family when you feel ill-prepared. Yet, despite these hardships, your love for your children is immeasurable, and you strive to provide them with everything possible to ensure their happiness. Alongside this, there may be debts to face and the arduous task of keeping a roof over your family's head. But you persevere and work your way through it, united in your determination.

Marriage, undoubtedly, has its share of ups and downs. It places tremendous strain on your relationship, testing the strength of your bond. The key to survival lies in having a partner who is wholeheartedly supportive, someone who stands by your side through thick and thin, enabling both of you to reach your shared goals.

In these recent years, I have come to realize that I had the privilege of having that perfect partner. I will forever cherish her memory and the profound impact she had on my life. Her unwavering support and dedication will be etched in my heart for eternity.

So, if you are fortunate enough to have a partner with whom you work tirelessly, hand in hand, you will emerge on the other side as a formidable team. The love you share will transcend any obstacles you encounter, remaining steadfast and enduring throughout your lives.

Expressing your emotions and sharing how you feel can indeed bring happiness, especially when it involves the most beloved person in your life. It is important to openly communicate your thoughts and feelings, including the ones that may be tinged with sadness. In my perspective, this ability to share both the joys and sorrows with your loved one is a manifestation of unconditional love.

Unconditional love goes beyond mere surface-level emotions. It encompasses acceptance, understanding, and support through all circumstances. It means being able to express your genuine emotions, knowing that your loved one will be there to listen, comfort, and stand by your side.

By openly sharing your feelings, you strengthen the bond between you and your favourite person. It creates a deeper level of connection, trust, and intimacy, fostering

a relationship built on honesty and authenticity. Through these heartfelt conversations, you can find solace, reassurance, and even solutions to challenges that arise.

Remember, true unconditional love is not limited to only expressing positive emotions. It embraces the entirety of the human experience, including moments of sadness, vulnerability, and pain. Sharing these feelings with your most cherished person demonstrates a level of trust and vulnerability that can deepen your connection and bring you closer together.

So, I wholeheartedly agree that talking about your feelings, even the ones that may be difficult, is an essential aspect of experiencing unconditional love. It allows for a profound understanding and acceptance of one another, fostering a lasting and fulfilling relationship.

Life often takes unexpected turns, and sometimes we find ourselves chasing material wealth in the belief that it will bring us happiness. However, it is in moments of hardship and adversity, when we are faced with poverty or challenges, that we are given the opportunity to grow wiser and gain a deeper understanding of life.

We may ask for specific things or circumstances that we believe will change our lives, but what we are truly given is the gift of life itself. Life is a precious and remarkable experience, filled with countless opportunities for joy, love, and fulfillment. It is not always about acquiring what we ask for, but rather appreciating and enjoying the blessings that life presents us with.

In my own journey, I have come to realize that the things I value most were not necessarily what I had asked for or hoped for. They are the moments of love, connection, and cherished memories shared with those who are dear to me. These are the true treasures that shape our lives and leave a lasting impact.

No matter the circumstances or challenges we face, we have the power to shape our own lives and find joy in every moment. It is through embracing life, loving deeply, and cherishing each day that we can truly make the most of our time here.

I want you to know that I have loved you throughout your entire life, and even though I may miss you for the rest of mine, the love we shared will continue to live on in my heart. Life is a precious gift, and it is through love and meaningful connections that we find true fulfillment and purpose.

Through my journey in life, I have discovered that the greatest treasures and joys are found in the relationships we build with the people we love, the places we explore and experience, and the precious memories we create along the way.

The love and connection we share with others bring richness and meaning to our lives. The bonds we form with family, friends, and loved ones are truly invaluable. It is in their presence, support, and shared experiences that we find comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging.

Exploring new places and immersing ourselves in different cultures expands our horizons and broadens our perspectives. The beauty of nature, the wonders of the world, and the diverse landscapes awaken a sense of awe and appreciation within us. These experiences create lasting memories that we carry with us, adding depth and colour to our life's tapestry.

But perhaps most importantly, the memories we make along our journey hold a special place in our hearts. Whether it's the laughter shared with friends, the milestones celebrated with loved ones, or the moments of personal growth and triumph, these memories become cherished treasures. They shape who we are and serve as reminders of the joys, challenges, and lessons we have encountered.

In the end, it is not the material possessions or external achievements that define a rich and fulfilling life. It is the connections we forge, the places we explore, and the memories we create that truly enrich our existence. Embrace the beauty of human connections, seek out new adventures, and cherish the moments that become the fabric of your life's story.

Over the course of eight years, I've come to realize that self-doubt is something we all experience at times. However, to progress and achieve success, it is crucial to have unwavering belief in oneself and embark on a journey of self-discovery. It is through understanding who we truly are that we can find inner peace and reignite our love for life.

When faced with challenging circumstances or the loss of a loved one, I choose not to grieve with sadness but instead approach it with a spirit of cheer. This doesn't mean disregarding or suppressing the emotions that come with grief, but rather finding ways to honour and celebrate the lives we cherish. It is in these moments of remembrance that we can find solace and embrace the joyous memories we shared.

Grief doesn't have to be solely about sorrow; it can also be an opportunity to reflect on the beauty and blessings that person brought into our lives. By focusing on the positive aspects and celebrating their presence, we can transform our grief into a celebration of their life and the impact they had on us.

In the face of doubt and grief, I have learned to embrace a mindset of resilience and optimism. Believing in oneself, understanding our identity, and choosing to grieve with cheer allows us to navigate through life's challenges and find the strength to move forward. It is through this journey of self-belief and finding inner peace that we can once again experience the fullness and love that life has to offer.

I understand that the process of healing can be challenging, especially when it comes to the pain caused by love. Love has the power to deeply touch our hearts and souls, making it one of the most significant and profound emotions we can experience. Consequently, when love is lost or goes unrequited, the healing process can be complex and lengthy.

The healing journey from a love-related hurt involves acknowledging and accepting the pain, allowing yourself to grieve and feel the emotions that come with it. It's important to give yourself the time and space needed to heal, as healing is a deeply personal and individual process.

While healing from the wounds of love may take time, it's important to remember that healing is possible. With patience, self-care, and support from loved ones, you can gradually mend the broken pieces of your heart. Surrounding yourself with positive influences, engaging in activities that bring you joy, and seeking professional help if needed can all contribute to your healing process.

Furthermore, focusing on personal growth and rediscovering your own self-worth can play a significant role in healing. Take this opportunity to learn more about yourself, your needs, and your desires. Use the experience as a catalyst for personal development and a deeper understanding of what you truly want in future relationships.

Remember, healing is a journey unique to everyone, and it may not follow a linear path. Some days may be more challenging than others, but with time, self-compassion, and the support of those around you, you can find solace and eventually open your heart to love again.

Sometimes if you're lucky someone comes into your life that will take up a place in your heart that no one else can fill someone who's tighter than a twin more with you than your own shadow who gets deeper under your skin than your own blood and bones.

Linda was the one who came to me.

In life, we encounter numerous individuals, some good and some bad, but there are also those who stand out as unique and extraordinary. At first, you may not understand why, but there's something about them that creates an indescribable aura. This person brings a smile to your face and leaves you feeling incomplete when

they're not around. For me, I found that person in 1979—an unassuming woman who eventually became my wife. As this time of year approaches, emotions and memories resurface with great intensity. Once again, I am reminded of the profound legacy Linda has left behind for all of us. She transformed me as a person through her selflessness and unwavering love, always placing the needs of others before her own. Throughout her life, she demonstrated limitless devotion to her family, protecting them as only a mother can. The greatest gift she bestowed upon me continues to evoke pain even after five years, but I'm grateful for it. It serves as a daily reminder of the depth of my love for her. Oh, how I miss her dearly.

There comes a time of year that defines who you are as a person and who has shaped you into that person. I thought I knew it all until I met the one person who was to change my life forever. Throughout her life, she strived to reach her true potential until the 1st of June 2015 when a simple headache turned into a nightmare, and I was left forever changed. Sadly, our family's rock, the matriarch who held us together, was taken from us on the 4th of July 2015.

In life, you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you; some will use you; some will love you, but the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind us why it's worth it.

In our life, we will also leave a record of ourselves and show the world who we were and what we did. None of us know how long we will live, and when that time comes, all that will be left about our brief lives is the pride the children feel when they speak our names.

I hope that one day my grandchildren will read my book because I know that a couple of them didn't have the opportunity to get to know Linda well. I hope that by reading this book, they will come to understand what a truly wonderful woman she was. One of my biggest regrets is that she never had the chance to form a bond with her young grandchildren, and they were unable to experience the love of their grandmother. However, through the act of writing this book, I am certain that they will come to appreciate the incredible person she was.

Eight years have passed since that fateful day, July 4, 2015, when Linda, my beloved, departed from this world. As I turn the pages of my journal, memories cascade like a gentle river, carrying the essence of our love through the years. It's a journey filled with pain, healing, and the enduring power of love.

In the beginning, my heart was shattered, and the pain seemed insurmountable. I felt lost, adrift in a sea of sorrow, unsure of how to navigate this new reality without her by my side. But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, I slowly

discovered the strength within me to continue living. Linda's love had instilled in me a resilience I never knew I possessed.

Through this journal, I found solace in pouring my thoughts onto these pages. The blank canvas of each entry became a mirror to my emotions, reflecting the rawest aspects of grief. Writing allowed me to hold onto her essence, preserving cherished memories that time threatened to erase.

In moments of despair, I would seek refuge in these pages. As if she were listening, I'd recount the memories of our life together. I'd write to her as though she were still here, whispering my heart's desires and pouring out my deepest sorrows. Though she was physically gone, her spirit was alive within me, and that love, oh, that love, transcended the boundaries of life and death.

As the years passed, I learned to honour her memory in the most beautiful of ways - by embracing life fully. Linda's love was the compass that guided me through the darkness, and her memory was the beacon of light that illuminated my path.

Throughout this journey, I met others who shared similar pain, and in my writing, I found a way to offer them comfort and understanding. I reached out my hand to those who needed it, just as others had done for me. Together, we formed a community of healing hearts, bound by love, loss, and the unwavering strength to carry on.

Though Linda is no longer physically present, I know that she walks with me in every step I take. Her laughter dances in the wind, her smile lingers in the sun's warm embrace, and her touch remains etched in my heart. Time may pass, but her love is eternal.

Now, as I close this journal, I do so with both a heavy heart and a heart full of gratitude. Grateful for the love we shared, thankful for the memories that continue to shape me, and appreciative of the gift that our love was and always will be.

I will miss her always, but I will carry the essence of our love forevermore. The pages of this journal may come to an end, but our story will live on, woven into the tapestry of time.

Farewell, my dear journal, and thank you for being my confidant, my sanctuary, and my reminder that love transcends all boundaries. Though I may no longer write within your pages, the love that fills them will forever be etched into my soul.

Until we meet again, Linda, know that my love for you will endure, unwavering and eternal.

Who was Linda?



There is so much I can say, but these are just insights into the extraordinary person she was.

After Linda's passing, an article appeared in the South Wales Evening Post, written by Chad Welch, published on Tuesday, July 28th, 2015.

The article paid tribute to Linda Emmanuel, a grandmother who dedicated her career, time, and home to improving the lives of disabled children. In tragic circumstances, Linda, a resident of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just 4 weeks and 5 days later. It all began when this 52-year-old visited a doctor complaining of a headache, and scans uncovered the shocking diagnosis.

Mrs. Emmanuel was a devoted carer for Carmarthenshire's short break service, a respite care service for disabled children and their families. She opened her own home to these youngsters. Her daughter, Anna Marie Sorroll, shared, "All that we were thinking of is all the children that she had been looking after. It didn't just affect us as a family; it affected all the children that she cared for. It was tough. She went up to the Heath Hospital and didn't come back."

In a personal tribute, she added, "Mom has always been a caring person and has raised us really well. She was a perfect example in all the work she did. The people she worked with all said there was only one Linda, and she's going to be really hard to replace."

Mrs. Emmanuel's 5-year-old grandson, Harrison Haines, has autism. Because of her work with autistic children, the family has been avid supporters of "Week on the Street," a local charity for autistic children. In honour of her memory, the family decided to donate any money received at the funeral to "Week on the Street."

Harrison and his mom shared a strong bond, and they understood each other profoundly. Week on the Street founder, Tom Nesmyth Shaw, noted, "She did a lot for autism. We didn't know each other well, but we spoke now and again, and it was an absolute pleasure." Mrs. Sorrell added, "We thought it was only right to donate to Tom's charity because we knew that he works closely with people that Mom worked with. She would have wanted that, and she was a supporter of it."

When Linda was first admitted to Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen, she shared a room with three other patients. One of those patients was elderly and had difficulty with her speech. When the food trolley arrived, the gentleman couldn't understand what the lady wanted to eat, even though she tried to communicate her preference. Linda, who was observing the situation, stepped in and conveyed the lady's request to the gentleman. He was surprised and asked how she understood the lady. Linda explained that her work with children with special needs had made her adept at deciphering speech impediments and understanding what people needed.

During our time living in Burry Port in my father's house, where we were closer to him as he was in a nursing home, Linda continued to care for the disabled children under her wing. Many of our neighbours were elderly women who took great joy in Linda's visits with the children and relished their presence.

These women were deeply saddened when they learned that Linda was hospitalized and diagnosed with a brain tumour. When I visited Linda in the hospital, she conveyed her concern about their welfare and asked me to share this note with each one of them.

Hello, my lovely ladies x I hear you have all been asking about me and I don't want you to worry x I remember when Gwyneth was ill how much it upset you. Just be reassured that I am in safe expert hands and fussing over lovely ladies just like yourselves actually they are watching out for me too x if ever you have to stay in Steffan ward the staff are very caring, compassionate, gentle, and we brighten up their day when they come to work. Try not to worry about graham because he has lots of support from family and friends x my lovely little children are all being cared for by their lovely families, so I am rested myself xi hope this brings you comfort. xx God Bless my dear friends ❤️❤️

kindest regards

Linda Emmanuel

In 2013, Linda worked at a Fire Protection company in Swansea, where she served as the office manager. During her tenure, she conducted an interview for a position within the office. While interviewing a young man, she noticed his lack of confidence in his communication. However, despite this initial impression, she chose to provide him with an opportunity to demonstrate his capabilities.

In August 2013, Linda decided to leave the company to focus on her work with Barnardo's, where she provided respite care to disabled children.

The young man she had interviewed was Jared Fry, a 30-year-old office worker. He wished to express his gratitude to Linda for the impact she had on his life. He sent her a text message with the following content:

"Hi Linda, I never had the chance to say a proper goodbye, but I wanted to let you know how profoundly grateful I am for everything you've done for me. It means more to me than you can imagine.

I realize that we might have had our disagreements at times, but when I initially accepted the job, I didn't believe in my abilities. I simply pretended to be confident,

as I had very little self-assurance. However, for some reason, you had faith in my potential.

The truth is, if the Fire Safety company were to, close tomorrow, I could confidently seek employment in an office setting. This newfound confidence is thanks to you, and it holds great significance for the rest of my life.

Once again, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude. You are a special person in my life, Linda, and you have made a significant difference. Thank you."

One in a Million

During her tenure at Carmarthenshire Short Break Service, she consistently made herself available to assist with recruitment and authored a blog to illustrate the nature of her work.

Looking back on the 8 years as a Short Break Carer today, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with, is the praise I received from my husband Graham (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of children that I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on. Its lovely to hear that people appreciate/admire the work that I do, some call me a special person, some have mentioned therapeutic carer but for me, it's embarrassing!! Writing it down is even harder!

I always remind my work colleagues that I will always say yes to anything because that is my nature, so that's why I am writing this blog. Must learn to say no!!

The first paragraph was the hardest to write but I wanted to show the respect that I have gained being a Short Break Carer. I suppose that if I didn't have these comments then I would probably think that I wasn't doing a good enough job! So, in that respect I thank and appreciate every one of them.

Being a Mum of 4 children and a grandmother of 7 children I suppose I have had plenty of practice of looking after children but not with children additional needs, until recently. My grandson, Harrison has been diagnosed with Autism within the last year.

My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. My husband noticed an advert in the Llanelli Star advertising for volunteers to provide respite to help support families locally, with Barnardo's. I fancied helping out, so Kay and I became carers. We are attending training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006. In time, Kay moved back to Newport, South Wales and I carried on as a single carer. In April last year Carmarthen Council took us in-house and I now work for the Short Break Service.

A little bit about the children I support.... They broke me in gently, so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started caring for children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome. I now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include, Multi-Sensory Impairments, OCD and special awareness issues, Dietary needs, Acid Reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my Team (Short Break Service), Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend Annual Reviews at Schools, Meetings with GP's, Children in Need Meetings, and any meetings that I can, that will enable me to help support the child.

A typical visit could be a child arrives on school bus to me. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and then work from there. Parents arrived with other sibling which gives me a chance to check on any issues such as, change of medication, update on what the child has eaten etc.

Once the parents have left and the children are comfortable and relaxed then the fun begins....if it's a nice day we may put a blanket out on the grass, collect some toys that the child may enjoy interacting with and at the same time seeing to the needs of their sibling, which may be very different from the other child, such as wanting a bounce on the trampoline, fun in the sand pit or just chilling watching Peppa Pig.

After tea, then bath time for the children and their favourite story time before bed. Once one child is settled to sleep then medication for the other child and supper then their bedtime. Tidy up time for me, including washing clothes for children before settling down to start my recordings before my early night!

Up early next day, before children, to get ready myself then waking children to give them breakfast, wash and brush their teeth and getting dressed ready for school. After they leave then its tidy up time and maybe changeover of bedding for different child arriving at 3.15pm.

Memorable times.....numerous amount of times, over and over again... Standing at a gate watching some animals grazing in a field, standing on a bridge waiting for a train to go underneath, watching a child running towards me for a cwtsh, a child repeating a repetitive tune back to me, watching the response from a child who doesn't communicate in the usual ways but by poking out their tongue as a response to your efforts, watching a child learn to work a block puzzle and requesting praise in their own little way by clapping their hands, watching a very unstable child learning to walk with shoulders, arms and hands in control, taking a memorable photo of a child or recording a memorable video to see progress a child is making....I could go on...I have learnt so much from these children and from my role as a Short Break Carer.

Yes, Linda you were a very Special Person and a true Professional.

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**TRAGIC MUM
DEVOTED
LIFE TO
HELPING
KIDS**

Chad Welch

TRIBUTES have been paid to a grandmother who devoted her life to improving the lives of disabled children.

Linda Emmanouel, of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just four weeks later.

Full story: page 11



Victim offered to call burglar an ambulance

PAGE 22

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Marathon's putting trade in fast lane

PAGES 12&13

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Linda's Story

Looking back on 8 years as a Short Break Carer, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with is the praise I receive from my husband (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of the children I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on.

My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. I fancied helping out so Kay and I became Short Break Carers. We attended training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006.

A little about the children I support

They broke me in gently so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started looking after children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome. I

now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include Multi-Sensory Impairments, OCD, and spacial awareness issues, dietary needs, acid reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my team (Short Breaks Service), Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend annual reviews at schools, meetings with GP's, children in need meetings and any meetings I can that will enable me to help support the child.

A typical visit

A child arrives on the school bus. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and

then work from there. Once the child is comfortable then the fun can begin. If it's a nice day we may take a blanket and some toys out to the garden, bounce on the trampoline, play in the sand pit or just chill out watching Peppa Pig. After tea and bath time it's time for their favourite story before bed.

Tidy up time for me, including washing the child's clothes before settling down to start my recording before my early night! Up early the next day to get myself ready then wake the child for breakfast, wash and brush teeth and get dressed for school. After they leave it's tidy up time and maybe a changeover of bedding for a different child arriving at 3.15pm.

There have been so many memorable times from standing at a gate watching animals graze to watching a child run over for a cwtsh. I could go on and on... I have learnt so much from these children and my role as a Short Break Carer.



In memory of Linda Emmanuel, Short Break Carer

Could you care for a child with a learning or physical disability? Do you like a challenge?

If you have time, energy, patience and a sense of fun; if you can relate to, respect, communicate and listen to children, please contact Carmarthenshire County Council to hear more about Fostering and Short Breaks. Tel 0800 0933699 or visit www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/fostering

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These stories are just a few I could go on, but my greatest joy was to receive an award for her work with the Carmarthenshire Council Care Services a beautiful Pottery Jug with the inscription “One in a Million” and “Linda Loved and Remembered Always”.





In a heartfelt tribute, Linda consistently embodied compassion in everything she did. Those who had the privilege of working alongside her unanimously declared, "There was only one Linda, and she's going to be incredibly challenging to replace."

To me, Linda was not only my soulmate but also an extraordinary mother and grandmother. Her nurturing spirit extended beyond our family, making her a living angel to many. The warmth of her kindness and the depth of her care left an indelible mark on everyone fortunate enough to have crossed paths with her. Linda's legacy is a testament to the immeasurable impact one caring soul can have on the lives of others.

Linda Jane Elizabeth Emmanuel 26/4/1963 – 4/7/2015

Magic of the “Wild Atlantic Way”

Travel and grief, I’ve found, are two sides of the same coin. Both take you on a journey grief leading you through the winding roads of the mind, while travel carries you along the open paths of the soul. My journey began on July 4th, 2015, when grief entered my life and changed it forever. It was the day I lost Linda, my beloved wife, to a brain tumour. But it was also the day she set me on a different path—a path of exploration, healing, and rediscovery.

Just before she passed, Linda urged me to travel, telling me I could love again but needed to find that love on the road. It took three long years for my heart and mind to catch up with her words—three years before the paths of grief and travel would converge, finally leading me to a place of inner peace. That place was Ireland, along the rugged and breathtakingly beautiful Wild Atlantic Way.

In 2018 and 2019, I found myself drawn to its winding roads and untamed coastlines, and I wasn’t alone. My loyal companion, Lizzy the Jug, was by my side, a constant reminder of life’s simple joys. Together, we ventured into the unknown, unravelling the threads of the past while weaving new memories. The miles we travelled along the west coast were more than just scenic routes—they were a journey back to myself, helping me honour Linda’s memory and embrace life again, step by step, year by year.

Lizzy and I set off on our latest adventure on April 17th, leaving Carmarthenshire behind and embarking on a journey that would take us across Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland before arriving in the Republic of Ireland. As we followed the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), we covered 2,950 miles and experienced the breath-taking beauty each county has to offer. We met incredible people who didn’t just remain acquaintances—they became friends.



I couldn't tell you how much farther we'll go, and honestly, I don't care. Time has lost its rigid structure; it is now measured by moments worth cherishing. Every day on this journey is a gift, and Lizzy and I are determined to savour each one. Linda would be so proud of what we've achieved, as life has taught me in the hardest way that it is far too short. So, we live for today, and embrace each moment as if it could be our last.

Right now, we'll head south, welcoming the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Sitting here, reflecting on another wonderful day spent exploring this beautiful country, I realize how much I'm enjoying the journey and the experiences that come with it.

One thing that has stood out is the pride people take in their surroundings. The homes are well-kept, charming, and full of character. The roads whether narrow lanes or coastal routes—are immaculate, with no litter in sight. It's clear that the people here cherish their country, and that pride shines through in every neat garden and tidy street. It's inspiring, and it has given me a newfound appreciation for the quiet, simple beauty that surrounds us every day.

The Wild Atlantic Way has become more than just a travel route for me—it has been a sanctuary, a place where grief and healing intertwine. In 2018, the pain was still raw, a weight that seemed impossible to lift. But as I traced the coastline, the stunning landscapes—where rugged cliffs meet the vast, restless ocean—offered a silent companionship. The windswept shores and mist-covered hills gave me the space to grieve, remember Linda, and honour the love we shared. I found comfort in the rhythmic crash of the waves and the endless horizon, reminding me that even in the darkest times, there is always a path forward, however uncertain it may be.

Returning in 2019 felt like coming back to a dear friend. This time, the beauty of the Wild Atlantic Way welcomed me with a different kind of embrace. It wasn't just about mourning anymore; it was about reconnecting with life, finding peace in the quiet resilience of the Irish landscape, and letting the vibrant greens, endless skies, and ancient rocks tell a story of endurance. The people of Ireland, with their kindness and unhurried ways, played a crucial role in my healing. Whether it was a friendly chat in a cosy pub, the sound of traditional music lifting my spirits, or a shared moment overlooking the sea, each encounter reminded me of humanity's shared struggles and joys.

These two journeys along the Wild Atlantic Way have not been a cure for grief, but they have become an essential part of my journey toward healing. They have taught me to carry Linda's memory with love, not just pain. As Lizzy and I continue our adventure, I know that the road ahead is still full of unknowns, but I also know that each day brings the promise of something beautiful. This journal will capture our story—of the places that called to us, the people who touched our hearts, and the magic that exists along the edges of the Wild Atlantic Way.

This is where grief and travel met, and where, mile by mile, I began to find my way back to myself.

The Most Unexpected Moments Along the WAW

People often ask me which part of the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) inspired me the most. It's difficult to choose just one, as each turn of the road brought something special, but there is one moment that stands out above all others.

On June 3rd, 2018, I decided to follow a sign for Healy Pass, starting from Adrigole and heading north. The narrow, winding road snaked its way upward through a rugged, rocky valley—an untamed landscape that seemed like a geologist's dream. The barren beauty of the place had a raw and almost otherworldly feel, and it seemed to whisper stories of ancient times.

As I reached the top, I couldn't stop—the car park was already full. So, I continued toward the summit, winding higher along the narrow path. Then, it happened. I crested the mountain, and what lay before me took my breath away. It felt like a scene straight out of a movie—a moment when the world opens to reveal a hidden paradise, a Shangri-La. There, unfolding before me, was the most stunning view I'd ever seen.

The landscape stretched out in a breath-taking panorama that pictures could never truly capture. The mountains rolled gently down to meet a lush valley, while the light danced on the lakes and streams below. It was magical—a view that left me speechless and stirred something deep inside me.



This was the pivotal moment of my journey. Don't get me wrong, the entire trip had been incredible, full of awe-inspiring scenery and unforgettable experiences. But there was

something about coming over that mountain and seeing this view that made it all feel truly extraordinary. It was as if, in that moment, I had found what I didn't even know I was searching for.

Healy Pass in Cork became a turning point, a place where the journey took on new meaning and left a mark on my soul that I would carry with me for the rest of my life.

Unplanned Moments and Unexpected Discoveries Along the Wild Atlantic Way

When people ask what inspires me to return to Ireland each year and travel the Wild Atlantic Way, my answer is always the same: it's the not knowing. It's the thrill of discovering new places and uncovering the stories that lie hidden in the landscapes. Each journey feels like an invitation to wander, explore, and find meaning in unexpected moments.

A day that sums up this sense of discovery happened on July 31st. Even though I've travelled to many of these places before, this time, I experienced them in a new light. What hasn't changed is the generosity, kindness, and warmth of the people I meet along the way—qualities that continue to make Ireland feel like a second home.

That day, I set off to Falcarragh on the recommendation of a local, who suggested I stop by the Gweedore Bar for a meal. But I arrived earlier than planned, so I had some time to spare. Just outside of town, I spotted the ruins of an old church, and curiosity got the better of me. I drove down a narrow, overgrown lane to get a closer look. At the end of the road, I realised I'd have to reverse back out, as it was too tight to turn around. But it was worth it.

The church, as I later found out, was Ray Church. Inside, a large stone cross pierced the sky, rising from the open roof, capturing my attention. I was intrigued why was such a large cross placed here? I did some research and was astounded by the history that unfolded.



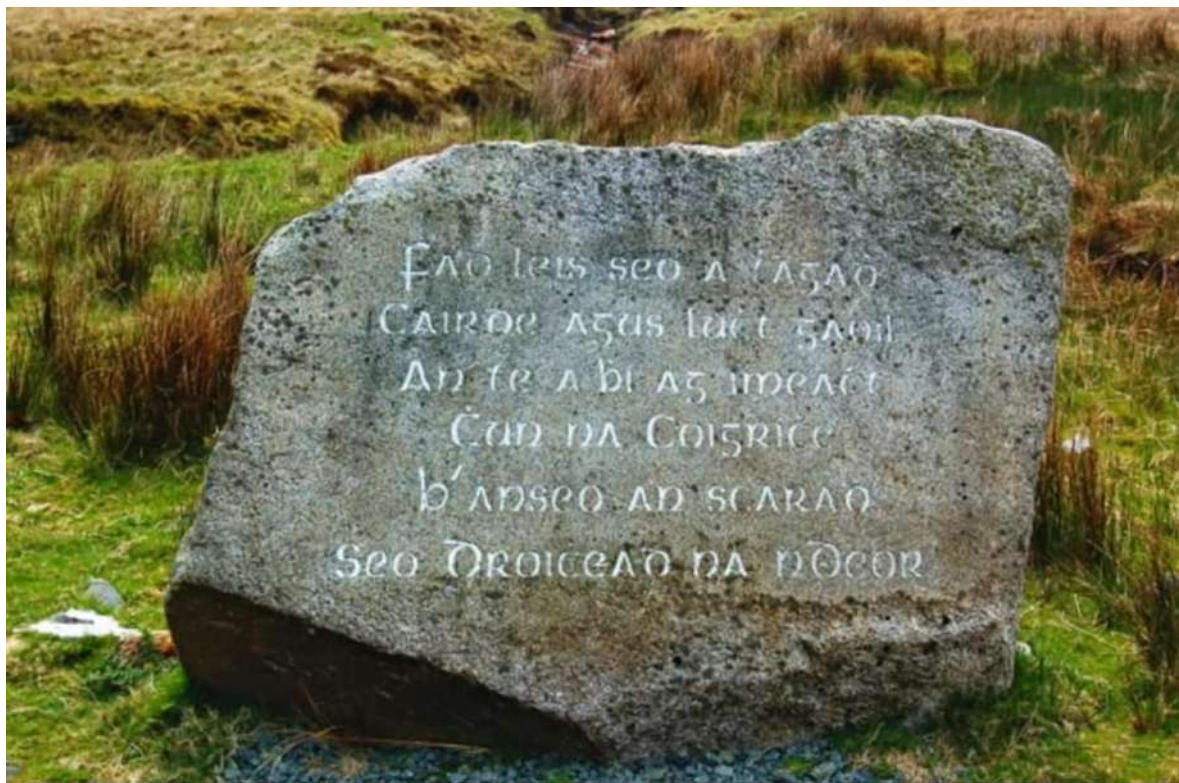
In the 17th century, the church had been the site of a massacre by Oliver Cromwell's men, who stormed in during a Sunday Mass, killing men, women, and children. The victims were laid to rest in a mass grave known as "The Resting Place of The Bones." The cross itself, carved from a single piece of stone, had originally been destined for Tory Island but was later gifted to the church. It was knocked down in a storm in 1750, repaired by the Office of Public Works in the 1970s, and placed inside the church to preserve its history.



Later that same day, as I drove back along the N256 from Falcarragh toward Glenveagh National Park, I had to pull over to let a car pass on the narrow road. That's when I noticed a boulder nearby with Gaelic writing carved into it. Curious once again, I discovered I had stumbled upon another poignant piece of history: the Bridge of Tears.



This bridge was once part of the main route to Derry, a road that many Irish people took when emigrating to America or other destinations during difficult times. It was here, at this very spot, that families would bid their final farewells, knowing they might never see one another again. The bridge earned its name from the countless tears shed there over the years—a place of both sorrow and resilience.



All of this happened in just one day, yet my journey along the Wild Atlantic Way lasted six weeks. It's difficult to capture the entirety of what I saw, felt, and experienced. Each day brought new wonders, and every path led to stories that touched my heart.

The trip was, once again, an emotional journey—one inspired by my beloved wife, Linda. She knew what she was doing when she told me to travel before, she passed away. It has given me a purpose, an opportunity to explore incredible places, meet amazing people, and, most importantly, rediscover myself.

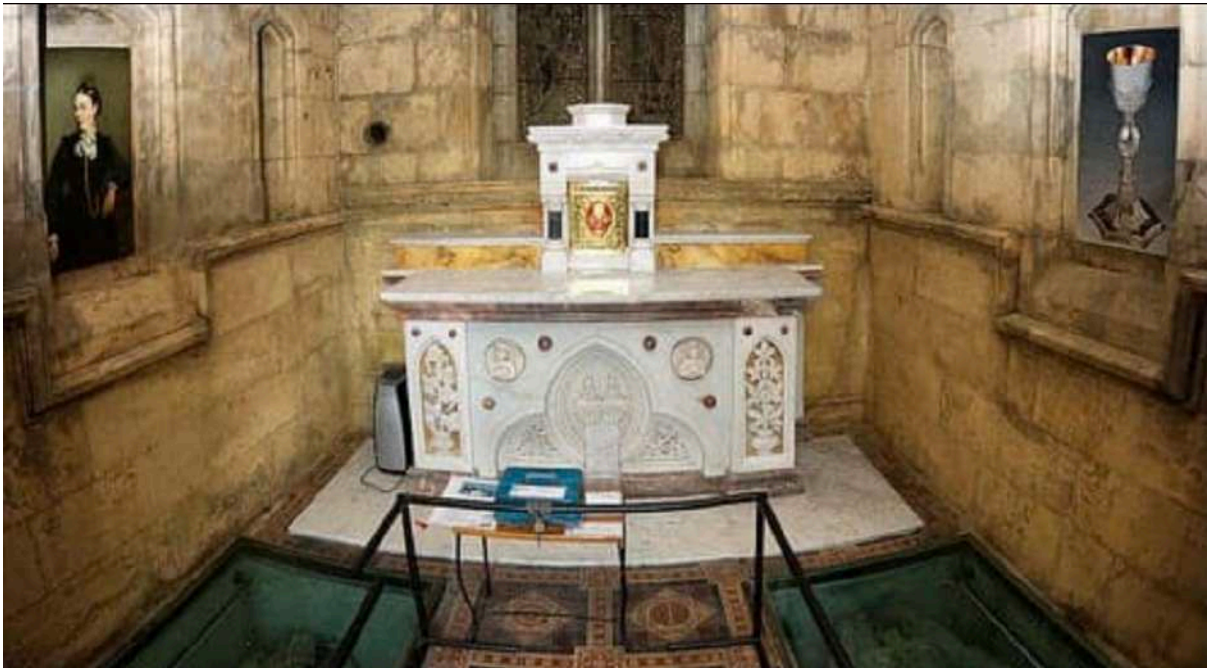
The Wild Atlantic Way is more than just a road; it's a path of healing, a canvas for memories, and a place where the unexpected can change everything.

A Story of Love in Carrick-on-Shannon

Every year, I find myself drawn to places that seem to whisper, "You need to be here." It's as if certain places along my journey call out to me, resonating with something deep within. In Carrick-on-Shannon, I stumbled upon such a place—a small, unassuming chapel that, at first glance, didn't seem particularly special. But when I learned its story, it touched my soul in a way few places have. It was the story of a man's enduring love for his wife and the lengths he went to honour her memory.



The chapel was built by Edward Costello in memory of his beloved wife, Mary Josephine. After her passing, he began work on the memorial, intending it to be both a monument to his love and a final resting place for them both. It was completed and dedicated on April 22, 1879. On that day, after the consecration ceremony, Mary's body was laid to rest in a sunken space to the left of the entrance, encased in a metal coffin. A specially made thick glass slab was placed over her, allowing the inscriptions on the coffin to be read even now, with the aid of a torch.



Mary's body had been carefully embalmed and cared for by the Marist nuns after her death, a testament to the devotion and love Edward felt for her. He wanted her memory preserved, even in death, so that she would always be near. When Edward himself passed away in March 1891, his remains were placed in a similar fashion to the right of the entrance, also under a thick glass cover.



For years, mass was held in the chapel on the first Friday of every month, a ritual that continued until Edward's own death. Since then, the chapel has fallen silent, nestled between two modern buildings, just a few yards from Carrick's town clock—a hidden relic of a love story that has quietly endured through the years.

Standing there, I felt a profound connection to Edward's devotion. It reminded me of my own love for Linda and the ways I've tried to honour her memory. My annual journeys to Ireland are, in a way, my tribute to her a promise to keep her spirit alive through the places I visit and the stories I uncover. As I stood outside that little chapel, I was reminded that true love

transcends time and space, living on in the quiet corners of the world where memories linger and hearts remain steadfast.



This chapel may not be grand, but its story is. It's a testament to the enduring power of love and the beauty of remembrance—a lesson that no matter how much time passes, love continues to echo across the years, touching the hearts of those who are willing to listen.

Taking my Breath Away

One trip that truly took my breath away was to Valentia Island in County Kerry. What started as a quick stop to see the lighthouse turned into something much more. I found myself driving further up the mountain, drawn by the promise of a better view. Reaching the higher ground, I looked down on Valentia Island Lighthouse from above, and the scene that unfolded was nothing short of incredible.



From that vantage point, the lighthouse stood proudly against the backdrop of the bay, with Beginish Island resting quietly in the distance. The whole landscape felt alive, with the sea stretching out and the rugged coastline wrapping around it all. It wasn't just a view; it was one of those rare moments when nature seems to come together in perfect harmony, reminding me of the beauty still to be found, even on the hardest days.

And then, finally seeing Fanad Head Lighthouse up close was another experience altogether. Standing right next to it, feeling the sea breeze, and hearing the waves crashing against the rocks, was like connecting with something timeless. The lighthouse, with its stark white walls against the deep blues of the ocean, felt like a beacon not just for sailors, but for me, too. It was a place that spoke of resilience and guidance, and in that moment, I felt a sense of grounding, as if I'd found a small piece of what I was searching for on this journey.

Fanad Head Lighthouse, located on the northern coast of County Donegal, has a rich history dating back to its construction in 1817. The lighthouse was built in response to a tragic shipwreck, the sinking of the HMS Saldanha in 1811, which claimed all 253 lives onboard. This disaster highlighted the need for a guiding light to safely navigate the rugged coastline.

Standing at 39 meters tall, the lighthouse has been a vital beacon for sailors for over two centuries, guiding ships through the treacherous waters of the North Atlantic and the entrance to Lough Swilly. Throughout its history, it has undergone various upgrades, including electrification in the 1970s and automation in 1983. Despite these changes, the structure has retained its iconic appearance, with its white tower standing proudly against the dramatic backdrop of Donegal's coastline.



Today, Fanad Head Lighthouse is not only a historic maritime landmark but also a symbol of resilience. It serves as a reminder of the lives lost at sea and the enduring efforts to protect those who navigate these waters, while offering visitors a glimpse into Ireland's maritime heritage and breath-taking views of the surrounding landscape.

A Magical Night at Ballycroy National Park



A few years ago, I had the pleasure of a truly unforgettable stopover at Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre. That night was filled with a mix of culture, magic, and the wonders of the night sky—an experience that left a lasting impression.

The evening kicked off at 9:30 p.m. with a session led by Dan O'Donovan, who enchanted us with his traditional Irish storytelling, verse, and song. His captivating words breathed life into the folklore, making it easy to get lost in the tales. As if that wasn't enough, Dan amazed us with his sleight-of-hand magic tricks, leaving everyone in awe—I still can't figure out how he pulled them off!

Later, we headed outside, with Lizzy in tow, to explore the night skies under the guidance of astronomers Ged and Georgina from Terra Firma Ireland. It was my first time having the night sky explained to me, and it made all the difference. I even saw the planet Venus for the first time, initially mistaking it for a star because of its brightness. I learned that unlike stars, planets don't twinkle—an insight that has stayed with me ever since.



The entire evening was a revelation, and I'd highly recommend their events to anyone. It was an experience that opened my eyes to the beauty of the world in a new way, and I look forward to returning someday.

I also want to mention Patrick, who was so helpful during my visit—it meant a lot at a time when I needed it.

While walking around the grounds, I noticed a plaque dedicated to Conservation Ranger Brian Harran, with an inscription that struck a chord:



*"In the end, we will conserve only what we love,
We will love only what we understand,
And we will understand only what we are taught."*

Those words resonated deeply and carry even more significance in today's world.

Cong Co Mayo

Cong, a charming village nestled on the border of Counties Mayo and Galway in Ireland, is steeped in history and natural beauty. It sits on a narrow isthmus between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, making it a picturesque location surrounded by lakes and lush landscapes. The village is perhaps best known for its connection to "The Quiet Man," the classic 1952 film starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara. Many scenes from the movie were shot in Cong, and the village still celebrates this heritage, with a museum dedicated to the film and various landmarks that recall iconic scenes.

One of the village's most notable features is the ruins of Cong Abbey, a medieval Augustinian abbey founded in the 12th century by Turlough O'Connor, the High King of Ireland. The abbey, with its intricate stone carvings and remnants of cloistered walkways, provides a glimpse into Cong's religious past. It was once a thriving centre of learning and worship, and its serene setting along the river adds to its sense of ancient tranquillity.



Adjacent to the abbey is the unique Fisherman's House, a small stone structure that the monks ingeniously used for catching fish. The building is situated over a narrow stream, with specially designed traps built into the floor that allowed fish to be caught without the need for nets. This clever method not only provided the monks with sustenance but also reflected their deep connection to the natural resources around them.



The river flowing through Cong is slow-moving and crystal clear, adding to the village's idyllic atmosphere. Stone bridges cross the gentle waters, and lush greenery lines the banks, creating a peaceful setting for leisurely walks. The area offers plenty of outdoor activities, from fishing and boating on the nearby lakes to exploring scenic trails that wind through woodlands and pastures.



Cong is a place where history, culture, and natural beauty blend seamlessly, providing visitors with a sense of stepping back in time while enjoying the charm and hospitality of a classic Irish village.

Solitude & Beauty

When people ask me what makes the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland so special, I tell them it's the one place where I can truly lose myself and reconnect with what life is all about.

The sense of solitude and breath-taking beauty make every moment feel almost euphoric, while the warmth and kindness of the people I meet along the way add a richness that's hard to find elsewhere.

Driving along the beautifully roads, I'm surrounded by the expansive marshland, where the landscape stretches endlessly before me.



The vastness creates a sense of freedom, and I feel the open air wrapping around me as I travel. One minute, I'm immersed in the tranquility of the winding road, and then, as I round a corner, I'm suddenly confronted by a stunning beach stretching out before me. Barley Cove Beach in Cannawee, County Cork, unfolds like a hidden gem, with its golden sands and gentle waves lapping at the shore.



This contrast is remarkable: from the peaceful marshland to the lively energy of the beach, where the horizon meets the sea in a dance of colour and light. It's moments like these that take my breath away, reminding me why I'm on this journey. Each unexpected view, each encounter, and each quiet moment spent in nature shapes my experience and deepens my appreciation for this incredible place.

Glengesh Pass

Glengesh Pass is one of the most breath-taking and dramatic mountains passes in Ireland, located in County Donegal. This stunning route winds its way through the rugged landscape of the Bluestack Mountains, offering travellers a picturesque journey filled with awe-inspiring views.



Kells Bay House & Gardens

During my visit to Kells Bay House and Garden in June 2018, I was immediately captivated by the serene beauty and charm of the estate. Nestled in a lush, green landscape along the Wild Atlantic Way, Kells Bay is a hidden gem that offers a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.



As I arrived at Kells Bay House, the stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the shimmering waters of the bay greeted me. The house itself is a beautifully restored Victorian residence, exuding a sense of history and warmth. Walking through its doors, I felt as though I had stepped back in time, surrounded by elegant decor and the faint scent of blooming flowers from the gardens outside.

The gardens were nothing short of spectacular. I wandered through the carefully curated pathways lined with vibrant flowers, exotic plants, and towering trees, each area inviting exploration. One of the highlights was the impressive collection of subtropical plants, which thrive in the mild climate of the area. The colours were vibrant, and the air was filled with the sweet fragrance of blossoms, making it a truly immersive experience.

One of the most memorable moments was when I stumbled upon the iconic Kells Bay palm trees, which stood tall against the backdrop of the mountains. I couldn't resist taking a few photographs, trying to capture the unique juxtaposition of palm trees in Ireland—an image that perfectly encapsulates the unexpected beauty of the place.

As I made my way through the gardens, I took a moment to sit by the water's edge. The tranquil atmosphere allowed me to reflect on my journey, surrounded by nature's beauty. It was a time of peace and contemplation, reminding me of the healing power of nature and the importance of taking a step back to appreciate the world around me.

My visit to Kells Bay House and Garden was not just about the stunning scenery; it was also a moment of personal reflection. The tranquillity of the gardens and the breath-taking views provided a perfect backdrop for my thoughts, allowing me to reconnect with myself amidst the natural beauty that surrounded me.



As I left Kells Bay, I felt a sense of rejuvenation. The experience was a reminder of the simple joys in life and the beauty that can be found in unexpected places. Kells Bay will always hold a special place in my heart, representing a moment of peace and connection during my travels along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Belleek Castle Hotel

As I entered Belleek Castle, I was initially excited by its stunning architecture, expecting to find a charming hotel. The grand stone facade and ornate details gave off an air of elegance that hinted at a luxurious stay. However, as I stepped inside, I quickly realised that this place was more than just a hotel.



The spacious foyer welcomed me with a rich history, filled with fascinating artifacts and beautifully crafted furnishings. Instead of the typical hotel lobby, I found myself in a museum, showcasing the castle's past and its connection to the surrounding area. Each room was adorned with exhibits that told the story of the castle and its significance, offering insights into local heritage that I hadn't anticipated.



I finally got the time to share pictures of my recent visit to Belleek Castle, Ireland. What a gem! This place is an hotel but also boasts an impressive armour collection. I had the honour of being shown around by Derek Davidson and Stephan, the Curator at Belleek, which I truly appreciated.



Exploring the castle felt like stepping back in time, as I wandered through halls lined with memorabilia and historical displays. The unexpected blend of hospitality and history made my visit feel special, as I absorbed the stories hidden within the walls.



Belleek Castle may not have been the hotel I thought it was, but it certainly left a lasting impression. The combination of its enchanting atmosphere and the fascinating glimpse into the past transformed my visit into an enriching experience, making it a memorable stop on my journey.

Tubrid Holy Well in County Cork

I had the opportunity to visit Tubrid Holy Well in County Cork, and it was truly a remarkable experience. As I approached the well, I was enveloped by a sense of calm and spirituality that I hadn't anticipated. The lush greenery surrounding the area created a peaceful atmosphere, with the gentle sounds of nature echoing all around me.



Upon reaching the well, I was captivated by the sight of water bubbling up from the ground, cascading over a small stone wall. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before; the water flowed freely, inviting me closer. The bubbling source, so pure and vibrant, drew me in, and I felt compelled to experience it first-hand.



I dipped my fingers into the cool, clear water and then took a moment to absorb the serenity of the place. Drinking from the well felt like participating in a long-standing tradition, a connection to the countless souls who have visited this sacred spot before me.

As part of my visit, I lit some candles at the well in memory of my beloved Linda, my dad Vernon, my mum Estelle, and Linda's mother Anne. Their presence was felt in that sacred space, and I took comfort in knowing they will always be remembered.



This visit was not just about the well itself but about finding peace and solace in a world that often feels chaotic. Tubrid Holy Well reminded me of the healing power of nature and the importance of pausing to appreciate the beauty around us.



If you ever find yourself in County Cork, I highly recommend taking the time to visit this beautiful spot. It's a hidden gem that offers more than just water; it offers a moment of stillness and a chance to reconnect with yourself and those you hold dear.

Reflecting on My Time on the Wild Atlantic Way

As I look back on my journeys along the Wild Atlantic Way, I find myself reflecting on the beauty and diversity of this stunning landscape. Each photograph I've shared over time has elicited different reactions from those who view them, highlighting the unique perspectives that each person brings.

What truly captivates me about the Wild Atlantic Way is how each region possesses its own charm. From the lush, green valleys and shimmering loughs to the stark, rugged landscapes of Connemara, every part of this route tells its own story. Each time I visit, I am reminded that nature is ever-changing; I notice details and nuances that I may have overlooked on previous trips. This sense of discovery is one of the main reasons I return.

During my last two trips, I've also encountered many people who, like me, have been inspired to embrace life and seek happiness anew. Hearing their stories of transformation fills me with hope and joy. It reminds me that the Wild Atlantic Way is not just a scenic route; it's a journey of healing and discovery for so many.

Life is for living, and time is a precious commodity that should never be wasted. The moments spent along the Wild Atlantic Way have taught me to cherish every experience, every encounter, and every breath-taking view. I look forward to what lies ahead and am grateful for the memories I have created along this remarkable journey.

Graham T Emmanuel & Lizzy the Jug 2018-2019

The Stones Talk

In exploration our ancestral roots through visiting the resting places of my ancestors and documenting has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage in how the words they leave tell us their stories too. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. I find some of their stories need to be told so some of the ones I think are worth in restoring them.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance, humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave.

It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

In Llandyry Church from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19th November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR PARENTS
EDWARD FRATER
DIED 29TH DEC 1957
AGED 68.
AND ELIZABETH FRATER
DIED 10TH MAY 1963
AGED 68
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

With each day more family history is discovered before I came onto the grave of George & Annie Cunnington with an inscription that mention their son Wilfred Courtney Cunnington with the mention on the headstone of his fate in the WW2.

As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

"In Loving Memory of OUR DEAR SON PILOT SERG WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON 148 B SQUADRON RAF (OF TRIMSARAN) LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS PEACE PERFECT PEACE"
ALSO GEORGE S CUNNINGTON, HIS DEAR FATHER DIED OCT 30, 1953, AGED 77 YEARS
ALSO ANNIE CUNNINGTON DIED NOV 10, 1969, AGED 90 YEARS AT REST



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

With each passing day, the journey through history brings new chapters to light, unveiling stories that have weathered the sands of time. Among the markers of remembrance, the memorial headstone of Nathaniel and Eliza Hancock (Plot PN-K8) stood as a silent testament to a family's enduring love and sacrifice, with an inscription that echoed through the years:



"PEACE IN LOVING MEMORY OF NATHANIEL HANCOCK DIED JAN. 8, 1937 AGED 59 YEARS. EVER IN OUR THOUGHTS, ALSO HIS DEAR WIFE ELIZA HANCOCK DIED SEPT. 23, 1955 AGED 76 ALSO OF THEIR SON RICHARD GEORGE HANCOCK B.S.M.-R.A. DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE 1939-1945 EVER REMEMBERED"

This inscription held a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by this family during a time of global turmoil. The mention of their son, Richard George Hancock, who died on active service, ignited a spark of curiosity, driving me to uncover more about his story.

And so, the journey of discovery led me to the remarkable story of Warrant Officer Class II (Battery Serjeant-Major) Richard George Hancock. His service, marked by dedication and courage, unfolded against the backdrop of World War II. Tragically, his life was cut short on the 14th of November 1942, in the sands of Egypt, amidst the fierce battles of El Alamein.

The scroll that commemorates his sacrifice reads:

"This scroll commemorates Battery Serjeant-Major R. G. Hancock Royal Regiment of Artillery held in honour as one who served King and Country in the world war of 1939-1945 and gave his life to save mankind from tyranny. May his sacrifice help to bring the peace and freedom for which he died."

Richard George Hancock's role in the struggle against tyranny is a testament to his bravery and selflessness. He stands as a symbol of all those who served, whose sacrifices paved the path to a better future. The battles he fought were

not just on distant lands; they were the embodiment of a collective effort to preserve freedom and humanity.

As I reflect on his story, I am reminded of the interconnectedness of history and how the lives of individuals intertwine with the greater narrative. The inscription on the headstone and the scroll of commemoration stands as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that Richard George Hancock's memory endures, and his sacrifice continues to inspire. May his legacy be a beacon of hope, reminding us of the price paid for the peace and freedom we hold dear.

I chanced upon an inconspicuous headstone, Plot (PF-C6) which soon revealed itself to be a poignant memorial that held a deeper narrative.



IN MEMORY OF
PRYCE LLOYD
DIED NOV 26: 1917
AGED 70 YEARS
ALSO GRIFFITH HIS SON THIS SON

KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
MARCH 28, 1918, AGED 28 YEARS

This solemn inscription piqued my curiosity, prompting me to delve further into the story of Pryce Lloyd's cherished son, Griffith. It became evident that Griffith was not laid to rest here, and my curiosity drove me to uncover more details. As I delved deeper, this is what I uncovered.

This is for the memory of Griffith Lloyd, Private, 307171, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Griffith Lloyd, the cherished son of Pryce and Ellen Lloyd. A life intertwined with the land, both Griffith and his father served as Gamekeepers at Trimsaran, residing at the Keeper's Lodge before the world was plunged into conflict.

Answering the call of duty, Griffith enlisted in Kidwelly, joining the ranks of the 2/8th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers. This valiant unit was affiliated with the 197 Brigade, a crucial part of the 66th (2nd East Lancs.) Division. Their journey led them to the Western Front, a theatre of sacrifice and valour, which they reached by the 16th of March 1917. From there, they ventured to the shores of Flanders.

As the seasons shifted, September of 1917 found them stationed in Ypres, where they steadfastly participated in the harrowing Battle of Poelcapelle. With determination, they then marched southward to the Somme, a name etched in history. On the fateful 21st of March 1918, the tumultuous tempest of the German Spring Offensive swept upon them at the Battle of St Quentin. Undaunted, they held their ground, and in the subsequent westward movement, they engaged in the Actions at the Somme Crossings—a chapter where destiny would unfold for Griffith.



In the crucible of battle, Griffith sustained wounds that would ultimately claim his life. Aged just 28, he passed away on the 28th of March 1918. His final resting place is Namps-Au-Val British Cemetery, France—an eternal abode where his bravery and sacrifice remain forever enshrined.

In humble tribute, we honour Griffith Lloyd, his unwavering courage, and the legacy he bestowed upon history. May his memory be a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

This marked another chapter in the history of this cemetery.

This another sad story which made me think of my family and what I would feel if this had happened to me. I was recording the details of a memorial stone of Mary Anthony (Plot PE2-D1) and took in the enormity of what I saw before me on the inscription.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
DAVID
SON OF DAVID & MARY ANTHONY
OF AQUEDUCT IN THIS PARISH WHO DIED
NOV 8, 1880, AGED 6 MONTHS
MARY ANTHONY
APRIL 27, 1884, AGED 29 YEARS
ALSO MARY DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE
BORN APRIL 27th, 1884, DIED APRIL 21st, 1901.

Indeed, the inscriptions on the memorial stones hold within them stories of heartbreak, loss, and the fragility of life. As you stood before the memorial stone of Mary Anthony, the weight of the narrative etched into the cold stone must have been palpable – a testament to the profound grief that can touch a family's life.

In the span of these few lines, a tale of tragedy and loss is woven, a tapestry of lives cut short, and hearts left shattered. The dates, the ages, and the relationships carved into the stone carry the weight of entire lifetimes condensed into a few words. The stark reality of Mary Anthony's story is heart-wrenching.

To lose a son at only 6 months old, to pass away at such a tender age of 29, and then, a cruel twist of fate, to bring a daughter into the world on the same day she herself would depart – it's a narrative that encapsulates the harshness of life's uncertainties. The story of Mary Anthony and her daughter Mary is a poignant reminder of the delicate balance between life and mortality, the fleeting nature of our existence.

Standing before that stone, the realization must have hit you with a wave of empathy and reflection. It's moments like these that make us pause and ponder our own lives, the lives of our loved ones, and the profound vulnerability that accompanies our journey through this world. Such stories bridge the gap between history and personal experience, making us realize that while time marches on, the emotions and the essence of human experience remain timeless.

As we contemplate the stories etched into these stones, may they inspire us to cherish the moments we have, to hold our loved ones a little closer, and to find meaning and purpose in the face of life's uncertainties. The vulnerability that you sensed in those inscriptions reminds us of the importance of compassion and understanding – for each life, no matter how brief, carries its own weight and significance in the grand tapestry of existence.

I've been dedicating my time and effort to meticulously record the cemetery memorials at Llandyry Church. This journey, undertaken in collaboration with the church warden, has been a profound and humbling experience. Today, I'm thrilled to share my reflections on this endeavour, hoping that you will find it as moving to read as I found it to live.

The process of documenting these memorials has been nothing short of overwhelming in the most touching way. Each gravestone represents a life – a story waiting to be uncovered, shared, and remembered. As I've walked among these silent sentinels, the weight of history has settled upon my shoulders, inviting me to honour the lives that once thrived within these hallowed grounds.

The gravestones transcend mere markers; they serve as windows into the past. The names, dates, and inscriptions etched into the stone unveil glimpses of triumphs and tribulations, joys, and sorrows. Each name is a thread in the rich tapestry of our shared human experience. Though weathered, these names still resonate, reminding us of lives once lived and connections that endure beyond time.

Continuing my exploration, I ventured to other local cemeteries such as Sardis Chapel, where I encountered fascinating individuals like Ivor Emanuel, Lance Corporal, 275, Welsh Guards:



Ivor Emanuel, hailing from Trimsaran, embodied the spirit of sacrifice ingrained in the village. Born to John and Mary Emanuel, Ivor entered matrimony with Prudence P. Richards in 1915, establishing a foundation of love that would sustain him through turbulent times. Initially enlisting with the Grenadier Guards in Llanelli, he later transferred to the newly formed Welsh Guards on February 26, 1915.



Belonging to the 1st Battalion of the Welsh Guards, Ivor's unit landed at Havre on August 18, 1915. Part of the 3rd Guards Brigade, Guards Division, this unit made history by being formed in France in the same month. The baptism by fire for Ivor and his comrades occurred during the Battle of Loos on September 25, 1915, a pivotal engagement in the Great War. Tragically, just two days later, on September 27, 1915, Ivor Emanuel paid the ultimate price for his courage, losing his life at the tender age of 23. His sacrifice is eternally commemorated on the Loos Memorial in France, serving as a poignant reminder of the cost of freedom.

I then came across an unassuming memorial stone with the Inscription on the top written in Welsh: -



ER COF PARCHUS AM
CHARLES ANWYL FAB DAVID AC ELIZABETH HARRIES,
ROSE HILL WAUN-Y-CLYN, O'R PLWYF HWN.
Cyfarfyddodd ag angau fel milwr dros ei wlad
yn Ffrainc, a chladdwyd ei weddillion yno
MAI 21, 1915, gan y 15th. Canadian Battalion
YN 27 MLWYDD OED.
Milwr aeth heb ymholiad - o'i fro draw
I fawr drin estronwlad;
Yno hyd fore'r caniad
Erys ei lwch, dros ei wlad. (Gwylfa)

I had to translate to see what it was: -

IN FOND MEMORY OF CHARLES,
BELOVED SON OF DAVID AND ELIZABETH HARRIES
ROSE HILL, WAUN Y CLUN, THIS PARISH
HE MET DEATH AS A SOLDIER FOR HIS COUNTRY
IN FRANCE AND WAS BURIED THERE
MAY 21, 1915, BY THE 15th CANADIAN BATTALION
AT THE AGE OF 27

He went a soldier without enquiry - from his native place
To big foreign battles;
There till the morning of the last trump
His dust remains, for his country.

Expanding further into the life of Charles Harries, Private, 17003, Royal Welsh Fusiliers:

Charles Harries, originating from Rosehill, Waunyclyn, Trimsaran, showcased a resilience that went beyond physical setbacks. Born to David and Elizabeth Harries, Charles made his initial attempt to enlist with the South Wales Borderers in September 1914. However, an ostensibly trivial hindrance—lack of teeth—resulted in his discharge within three weeks. Undeterred, Charles demonstrated unwavering determination, promptly re-enlisting, this time with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Deployed to France on February 2, 1915, Charles became a part of the 1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, attached to the 22 Brigade, 7th Division in Flanders. His inaugural exposure to significant action transpired in March 1915 at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, followed by active engagements at Aubers Ridge and Festubert in May. Regrettably, during the Battle of Festubert on May 21, 1915, Charles Harries fell in action at the age of 27. His memory persists, commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Richebourg L'Avoue, France—a poignant testament to his bravery and the sacrifices made by the men of Trimsaran in the relentless pursuit of a better world.

Surprising what you find from just a few words.



ALSO, OUR LOVING SON LIEUT. JOSEPH VINCENT HITCHINGS DIED JUNE 9 1944 AGED 32 YARS
REST IN PEACE

This is what we found out about Captain Joseph Vincent Hutchings, 1841-1915, Somerset Light Infantry, son of William and Miriam Hutchings of Cloverdale, Trimsaran. He served with the Somerset Light Infantry, dedicating his life to the service of his country. Tragically, Captain Hutchings made the ultimate sacrifice on June 9, 1944, at the age of 32.

His final resting place is in Trimaran (Sardis) Independent Chapel yard, a hallowed ground where the community honours his memory and pays tribute to the sacrifices made by local heroes.

Our journey still carries on in Sardis with our men who gave up their lives down the Coal Mines one such miner a Thomas David 1854-1923 one of ten who was involved in a mining disaster at Trimsaran Colliery and found these two editorials about the incident on 26 April 1923

Extract from Hanes Tabernacle 1872-1979 the mining disaster of 26 April 1923

Treasurer: Mr. Sidney Griffiths One of the next recorded events was the incident on April 26th, 1923. On this date, a serious accident occurred at the Trimsaran Colliery Caeduan. When the men were returning to the surface from their work, the shackles broke, and the 'spake' (the lift cage) plummeted to the bottom, causing the men with it, and in a few seconds, ten lives were lost, and half a hundred were injured.

The following Editorial from The Daily Mail the 27 April 1923 day after the tragedy which has been re-edited.

RUNAWAY TRUCKS IN MINE: TRAGIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS NINE LIVES

A devastating incident occurred at Trimaran Colliery, near Llanelly, in the Welsh anthracite coalfield, resulting in the loss of nine lives and numerous injuries. The morning shift had just concluded, and a string of trains carrying miners and tools was ascending the 1,400-yard-deep drift when tragedy struck.

As the trams ascended about 300 yards, a link in a shackle snapped, causing five trains to rapidly descend the drift. The runaway trains careened wildly for a distance before derailing and piling up in a chaotic scene. Seven miners lost their lives on the spot, while two succumbed to their injuries on the way to the

hospital. Approximately five miners sustained severe injuries, and around 20 others were less seriously hurt.

The cries of the injured and the loud crash attracted the attention of miners awaiting their turn at the bottom of the drift. They rushed to the scene and initiated rescue efforts. Despite swift action, it took hours to disentangle everyone from the wreckage. The injured were promptly transported to Llanelly hospital for treatment.

The victims of this tragic incident are:

David Tom Davies. 19 - Single

Morgan W Davies. 35

Thomas John. 70 – Married with grown up family

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237649478/thomas-john>

William Jenkins. 44 - Married with four children, an under Manager

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/260854093/william-jenkins>

Harold Herbert Parry 24 - Single

Harold Probert. 15 - Teenager

William John Rees. 28 - Single

Thomas Rogers. 20 - Single

Sidney Williams. 25 – Married with one child

Thomas Williams. 47 – Married with grown up family

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262034940/thomas-williams>

The highlight of my discovery at Sardis Chapel was the poignant story of a relative, Lilian May Rees, 1898-1924, affectionately known as Lily. She holds a significant place in my family tree, spanning approximately three generations. Here is her story:

The Mystery of the J. Rees Brass Twist Miners Tobacco Chewing Box

In February 2021 I was contacted by a Carrie Rees from Australia on My Heritage Family History site about our DNA Links on the site.

Initially we couldn't see a direct link but on Friday I revisited the site to look at the DNA section and I noticed that Carrie Rees was a match of 3rd-4th cousin and clicked on the review and this is where this lovely story started to unfold.

The DNA link to a Carrie Rees I found out we had a common Great Grandparents dating back to 1850's to John and Mary Lloyd following down from them to us both, one of their children was Lily (Lloyd) Rees who was Carrie Rees is Grandmother known as Lily and her husband was Thomas John Rees who was known as Johnny.

This is where it took a very unusual and interesting turn in my family, we have an heirloom Display Cabinet where there is what we thought was a Brass Snuff Box which has been in our family for a very long time, what is written on the Box is J REES BRYN COTTAGE TRIMSARAN on the front and on the back is Inscribed XMAS 1929 BOX I have been wondering who it had belonged to for a long time and suddenly wondered was this the same person.



Therefore, could this be that Thomas John Rees known as Jonny be the same "J Rees" on the Box with a little more research the Lloyd family which my mother and Grandmother were part of many of them had been born at Bryn Cottage.

Looking at the records at 1929 I found the Rees family would have been living there so the Snuff box must belong to Carrie Rees grandfather Thomas John Rees, so had I now finally solved the mystery but not why it was in my family care for all this time that's another story.

Following on from this I found out that Thomas wife Lily Rees is buried at Sardis Welsh Independent Chapel Cemetery in Trimsaran 3 miles from me, so I went and had a look

and guess what I found her grave, and I then took my cleaning stuff with me and cleaned her headstone up for her the first time in 98 yrs.

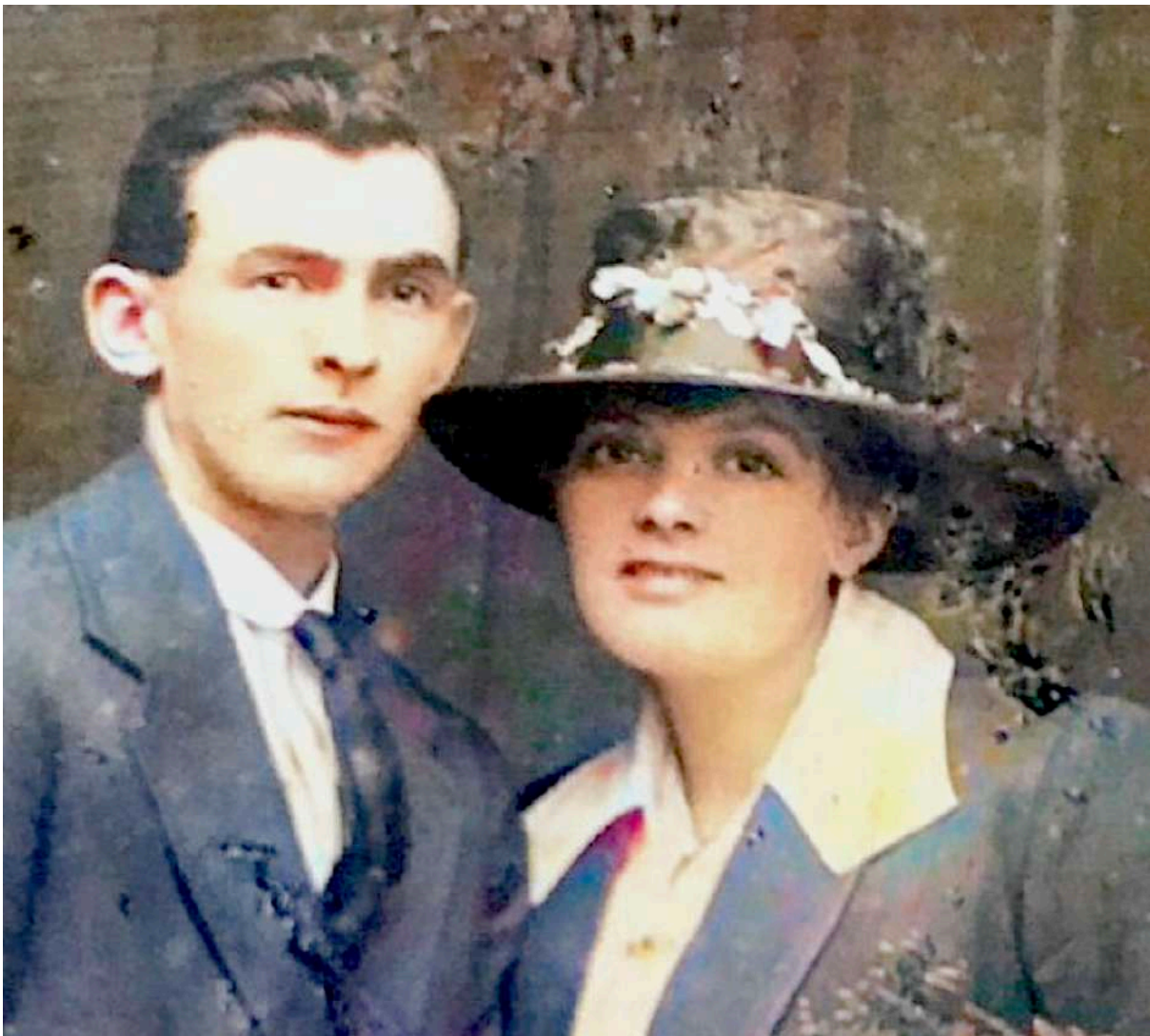


Her story is a sad one she was born on 9 September 1898, her father John, was 47 and her mother Mary was 43.

She had two sons and two daughters with her husband Thomas John Rees between 1920 and 1924.

She died as a young mother on 7 September 1924 in Trimsaran, Carmarthenshire, Wales at the age of 26.

I have found a black and white picture of Thomas and Lily when they were married that I colourised what a beautiful woman she was so now I can put a face of Thomas who received this Christmas present 93 years ago.



To finish this story off I have sent Carrie Rees a message through My Heritage to tell her I will be donating her Grandfather's Snuff Box as our Xmas Box to her for 2022 from our family 93 yrs. since Thomas received it in 1929.

I have had a reply today from Carrie willing to accept our families offer of returning her grandfather's Snuff Box to their family again.

This has been such an emotional ride for me it's given me the opportunity to get to know this couple and so sad that she lost her life so young with 4 young children in such a short time.

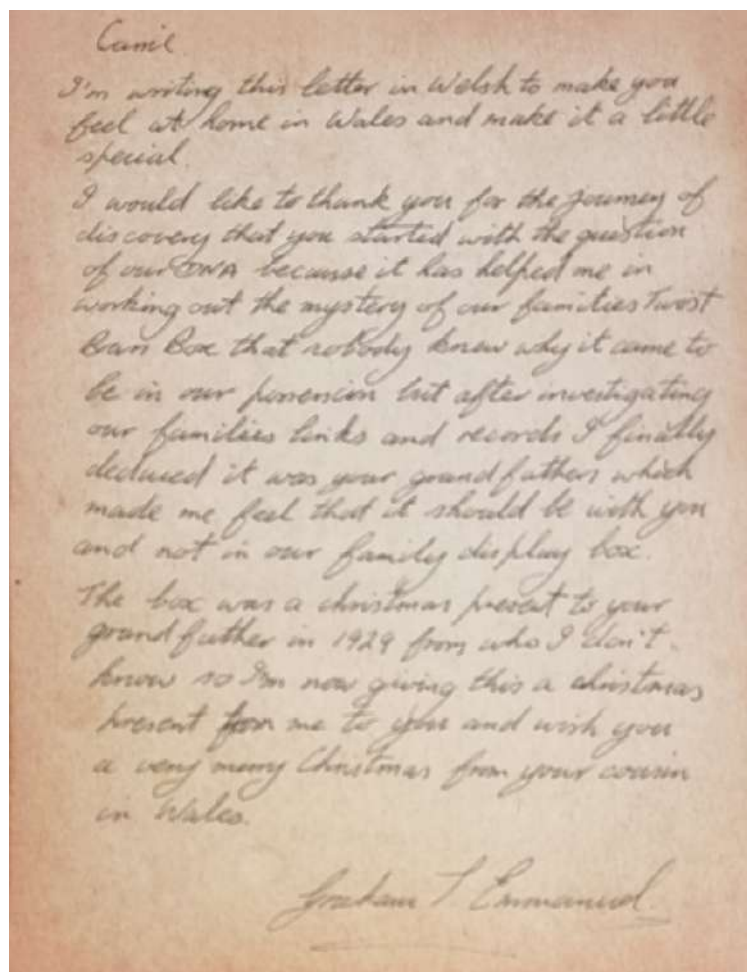
To also find out that Thomas and Lily's son Sergeant Alun Rees a Gunner in the RAF died on January 14, 1943, during World War II after being shot down over the sea in Zeeland Netherlands.

What a couple of days to have experienced all this as if it was meant to be for me to uncover so much about my family and their family from one Brass Snuff Box and what they were all about back over 100 years ago incredible.

The Journey Home

To make sure when I sent the Snuff Box which we later found out was called a Tobacco Twist Box which miners used underground to chew tobacco I decided to send then 3 letter one to thank them for taking me on a journey of discovery.

Then to translate one letter in Welsh so that they could feel that it was coming back to them from Wales that then in English and finally the story written down to what I have written above so in years to come their family will know what a journey this box has been on for 93 years.



Camil

I'm writing this letter in Welsh to make you feel at home in Wales and make it a little special.

I would like to thank you for the journey of discovery that you started with the question of our DNA because it has helped me in working out the mystery of our families twist Brass Box that nobody knew why it came to be in our possession but after investigating our families links and records I finally deduced it was your grand father's which made me feel that it should be with you and not in our family display box.

The box was a Christmas present to your grand father in 1929 from who I don't know so I'm now giving this a Christmas present for me to you and wish you a very merry Christmas from your cousin in Wales.

Graham J. Emmanuel

Cwmel

Dwi'n ysgrifennu'r llythyr yma yn
lymraeg i wneud i chi deimlo'n gastrol
yng Nghymru ac i wneud y llythyr bach
yn arbennig.

Hoffaf i ddiolch i chi am y deuth o
ddarogan fforddiad bod ti wedi dechrau gyda'r
caestun o'r DNA gan ei fod wedi helpu fi
i weithio mas y dirlwch o'r boes Pres Troell
yn ein teulu.

Doedd neb yn gwybod sut oedd y boes wedi
deu yn ein heiddo, ond ar ôl ymchwilio ein
cysylltiadau teuluol a chyfnodau unes i o'r
dwydded diddwytho mae boes yn berchen dy
Tadur.

Mae hwn yn gwneud i fi deimlo tan dylair boes
bod gyda chi ac nid yn boes dengorsydel ein
teulu.

Rodd y boes yma yn amlyg Nadolig i dy
Tadur yn 1929, dwi ddim yn gwybod o bwy.

Felly, hoffaf i roi hwn i ti fel amlyg Nadolig
chomaf i ti ac i ddyonono Nadolig llwyr
hupus o dy gaffnither yng Nghymru.

Graham J. Emmanuel

Trimsaran, a village of remarkable character and resilience, has woven an extraordinary tapestry of history. From the echoes of its industrial past to the indelible marks left by generations of inhabitants, this community stands as a testament to strength, adaptability, and shared heritage. The legacy of Trimsaran, imprinted in the hearts of those who have called it home, resonates with the stories of hard work, unity, and the enduring spirit that has shaped the lives of its people. As we explore the rich history of this village, we celebrate the enduring legacy it has bequeathed to all who have been fortunate to be a part of its narrative.

Finding Myself Through Loss and Mobile Technology

On the 4th of July 2015, in the height of summer, my world was shattered. I said goodbye to the love of my life, Linda. She had fought a relentless battle with a brain tumour, facing it with unwavering courage and grace. But in the end, even her incredible spirit couldn't overcome it. Her absence left a void so vast that I found myself lost, navigating the tumultuous waves of grief with no anchor. For nearly three years, I carried the weight of that loss, trapped in memories while struggling to face a future without her. The pain was constant, and I often wondered if I would ever find a way to heal, to move forward.



Then, one day, while sitting with a cup of tea, I reflected on the past four years and realised just how much my life had changed. It all started when I decided to have a campervan made for me—a decision that would set me on a path I never could have imagined. Alongside me was my new travel companion, Lizzy, a lively little Jug (a cross between a Jack Russell and a Pug).

At first, the journey was anything but smooth. The day I got the van, I realised I knew absolutely nothing about living or travelling in one. I didn't even know how to change and service the toilet! Too embarrassed to ask anyone, I turned to YouTube, and, well—problem solved. That became my new way of life: trial and error, learning as I went, embracing the "suck it and see what happens" approach.

That first year on the road taught me a lot, and not just about campervans. I learned that I was carrying far more baggage—both physically and emotionally—than I needed. I had no real plan, no structure, just an endless road ahead of me. I was traveling aimlessly, moving from place to place without truly taking it all in.

Then, a year into this nomadic life, Lizzy and I left Wales for a trip with no set destination. I remember thinking, For Christ's sake, Graham, have a plan! But I didn't. That's what grief does to you. It leaves you lost in yourself, uncertain of how to move forward. You wake up each day with no real direction—just hoping that something, anything, will happen.

But something did happen.

April 17, 2018, is a date that will be forever embedded in my mind. It was the moment my journey truly began—not just a journey of travel, but a journey to rediscover who I was. As I explored breath-taking landscapes and places I had never seen before, I began to find a new sense of purpose. Travelling wasn't just about moving anymore; it became an addiction, a passion, a way to heal.

What started as a one-week plan stretched into two, and before I knew it, Lizzy and I had made our way up to Scotland, taking in the sights. Every day, I found myself thinking, this is brilliant. I wonder what's next. Then, one morning, I glanced at my Collins map and noticed a dotted line stretching from Scotland to Ireland. Must be a ferry, I thought. And sure enough, it was.

We boarded a ferry from Cairnryan to Larne and soon found ourselves in Northern Ireland, staying at Dundonald Caravan Park. Belfast welcomed us with open arms, and the kindness of fellow travellers—especially other Jug owners—made my stay unforgettable.

From there, we followed the North Coast, eventually reaching Derry.

And that's when I discovered something that would change everything.

The Great Wild Atlantic Way.

The moment I learned about it, I thought, wow—what a journey this could be. And it truly was. For the next five weeks, we travelled along one of the most stunning routes in the world. I witnessed sights that were nothing short of breath-taking and met people whose warmth and kindness left a lasting mark on me.



That trip wasn't just about exploring new places—it was about rediscovering myself. It was the turning point that set me on the path to becoming a digital research historian, developing the skills that would shape my future.



From grief to adventure, from being lost to finding my purpose—this is my journey. And this is just the beginning.

This was when I knew that I had finally found out who I was as a person and a better one after this long trip.

I wasn't so tearful anymore and I knew why my Linda had encouraged me to travel as she knew that this was the only way I was going to be able to move forward in my life and finally be able to live again and take each day as it comes and love life at last.

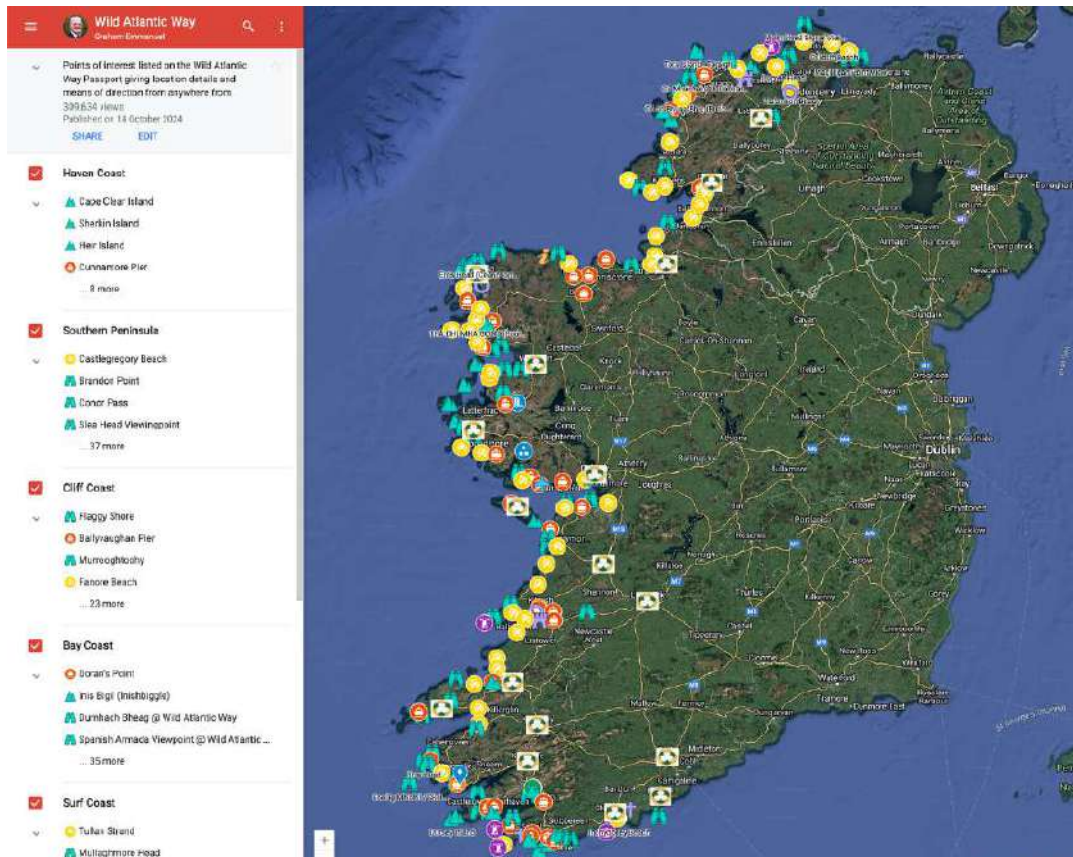
Mapping My Journey: Discovering Digital Cartography

After my first major trip in 2018, during which I often found myself lost on my travels, I realised I needed a better way to navigate and plan my routes. That's when I came across a YouTube video about creating custom maps using Google MyMaps. Intrigued, I decided to give it a go.

I started by meticulously plotting a detailed map of the Wild Atlantic Way, documenting every location included in the **Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way** map. What began as a simple tool for my own travels quickly turned into something much more—a passion for mapping and documenting historical and cultural sites. This newfound interest in digital research and cartography would soon shape the next chapter of my journey, leading me toward an entirely new career path.

Learning to Use MyMaps: A Journey of Trial and Error

This is where I discovered how to use **Google MyMaps**, and it was a real learning curve. It took me many attempts and mistakes to understand how it all worked. But through persistence, I eventually figured it out and used it to document my travels.



<https://tinyurl.com/Wild-Atlantic-Way-2018>

To make things easier for beginners, I have written a simple guide on how to get started with **Google MyMaps**. Here it is:

Getting Started with Google MyMaps: A Beginner's Guide

1. **Open Google MyMaps**
 - o Go to Google MyMaps.
 - o Click "**Create a new map.**"
2. **Add a Base Map**
 - o At the bottom of the map, click "**Base map**" to change the style (e.g., satellite, terrain, or default map view).
3. **Adding Locations (Pins/Markers)**
 - o Click on the "**Add marker**" tool (pin icon).
 - o Click on the map where you want to add a location.
 - o Name the location and add details like descriptions, links, or photos.

4. **Drawing Routes and Paths**
 - Click on the "Draw a line" tool (line icon).
 - Choose "Add a driving, biking, or walking route" and click on your start and end points.
 - Adjust the route by dragging points.
5. **Creating Layers (For Organizing Places)**
 - Click "Add Layer" to organize your locations (e.g., separate layers for accommodations, landmarks, and campsites).
 - You can hide or show layers as needed.
6. **Customizing Your Map**
 - Click on a marker or route to edit colours, icons, or descriptions.
 - Use different colours for different categories (e.g., blue for water-related sites, green for forests).
7. **Saving and Sharing Your Map**
 - Click "Share" in the top-right corner.
 - Choose who can view or edit the map (private, public, or shared via a link).
8. **Accessing Your Map on Mobile**
 - Open the **Google Maps app** on your phone.
 - Tap "Saved" > "Maps" to view your custom maps.

Links to How to Video's in Youtube

<https://tinyurl.com/MyMap-Tutorials-123>

With practice, you'll be able to create detailed travel maps just like I did. Start experimenting, and don't worry about making mistakes—every mistake is just another step toward mastering it!

Surveying Llandryr Cemetery: A New Historical Project

My next project came about purely by chance. While exploring **Llandryr Church cemetery near Trimsaran**, I met the church warden, and our conversation soon turned to the idea of **documenting the graves**. Since I had already researched and recorded many of my **own family ancestors**, I offered to help him set something up. However, what began as a small project soon escalated, I ended up **surveying the entire cemetery**.



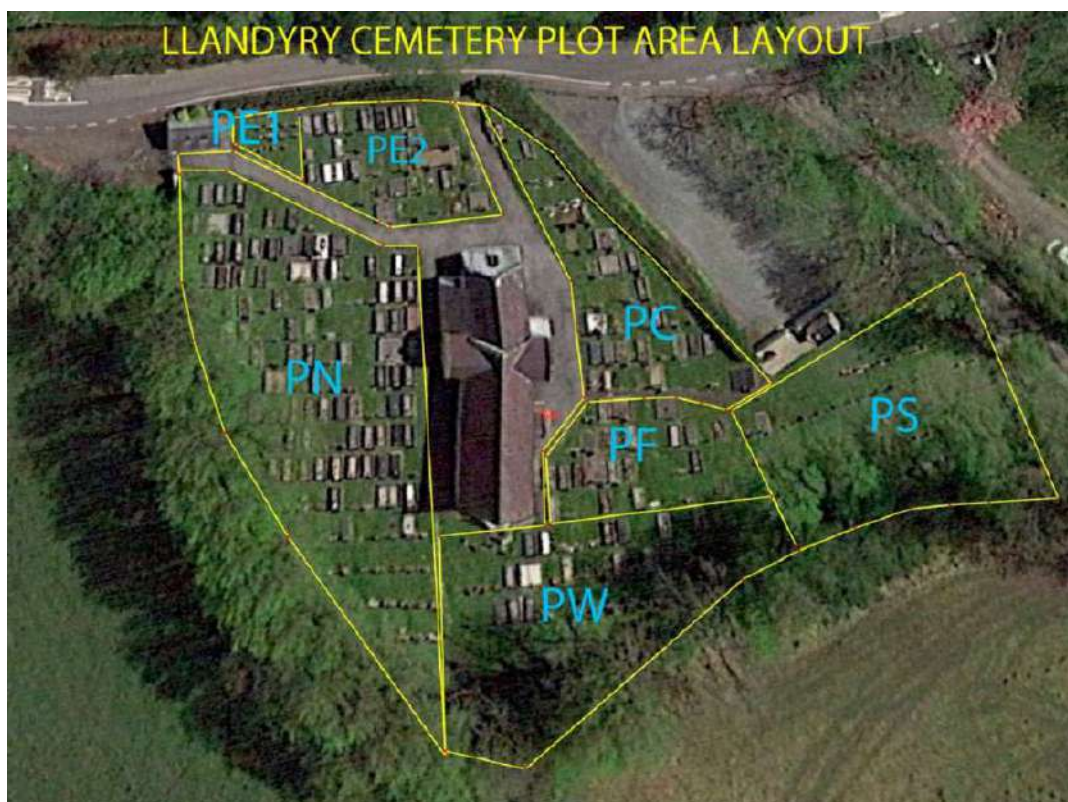
To efficiently record the memorials, I decided to **utilise the power of my Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra**. At first, the process was quite **time-consuming**, so I started looking for apps that could simplify and speed up the work. That's when I discovered the **Find a Grave** app, a tool specifically designed for documenting and preserving cemetery records.

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Using **Find a Grave**, I was able to:

- ✔ **Photograph** and upload headstones directly from my phone.
- ✔ **Tag and categorize** graves, ensuring accurate records.
- ✔ **Link family members** within the app to create detailed family connections.
- ✔ **Share and contribute** to a wider genealogical database.

Before I could begin photographing efficiently, I needed to create a **structured grid layout** of the cemetery. I used **Google Earth's Path creation tool** to design a **sectioned map**, then took a **screenshot** and edited it in **Adobe's photo editing software** to finalise a **clear, structured reference**. This helped me **systematically survey each section** without missing any graves.



What started as a simple conversation turned into a **historical documentation project**, allowing me to **preserve local history** while sharpening my skills in digital surveying. This experience would go on to shape the way I approached **historical research and cemetery documentation** in the years to come.

My Journey into Digital Research Methodology

I never planned to become a memorial researcher. I didn't start with a system or a strategy. I started with a question—and a name.

While helping to document Llandryr Churchyard near Trimsaran, I uncovered a small, half-buried stone. It turned out to be a memorial—not a grave—to a young man named Leonard Frater. That moment sparked something in me. I wanted to know who he was, where he came from, and why he was remembered there.

That single discovery led me down a path I never expected. I began researching local war memorials in Kidwelly, Pembrey, and Burry Port. But I quickly realised that many names were missing individuals who had served and died but weren't listed on public memorials. Some were remembered only on headstones in quiet cemeteries. Others had no visible tribute at all.



As I've frequented the church in my pursuit to locate and document each family member's grave, fate threw me a chance meeting with a remarkable individual – Declan Owens, the Llandryr Church Warden. Conversations flowed, and I learned that he was deeply involved in a project to meticulously document all those laid to rest in the church cemetery. The dedication to this endeavour was evident in the beautifully maintained grounds that cradled the history of countless souls.

Eager to contribute, I eagerly delved into their existing documentation plan. However, it soon became clear that this system was not as comprehensive and up to date as it needed to be, especially with the constant addition of new graves. Recognizing an opportunity to lend my expertise, I proposed a more efficient approach to memorial documentation.

In the span of just a week, I crafted a new system. Armed with a Word document and grid reference numbers, I meticulously recorded each memorial's details, capturing their essence through photographs of the weathered gravestones.

Then, a seamless transition to modern technology occurred as I harnessed the power of Google Lens to transcribe the scanned text information onto the Findagrave Cemetery site. This dynamic duo of Word and Lens, further enriched by Google Translate, bridged the language gap, allowing a wider audience to appreciate the inscriptions, many of which were in Welsh.

This endeavour has sparked an unexpected joy within me. Beyond the act of documentation, it's the harmonious fusion of tradition and technology that fuels my enthusiasm. My system guarantees accuracy, with any discrepancies promptly rectified and preserved. The magnitude of completing this feat is not lost on me; a swell of pride accompanies each entry made.

Although the task ahead is formidable and demanding, I embrace every step with open arms. Yet, I yearn for a local ally, someone well-versed in the intricacies of the app, who could expedite the process. Currently, my routine includes on-site visits to acquire GPS coordinates, ensuring seamless integration with the larger project's framework.

The potential impact of this collective effort is deeply stirring. The preservation of the church's history feels like a sacred duty, and I'm humbled to play a part. With unwavering dedication, I press on, anticipating the day when this project reaches its culmination. In my record-keeping, I've also thoughtfully logged the locations of unmarked graves, providing reference points for the future.

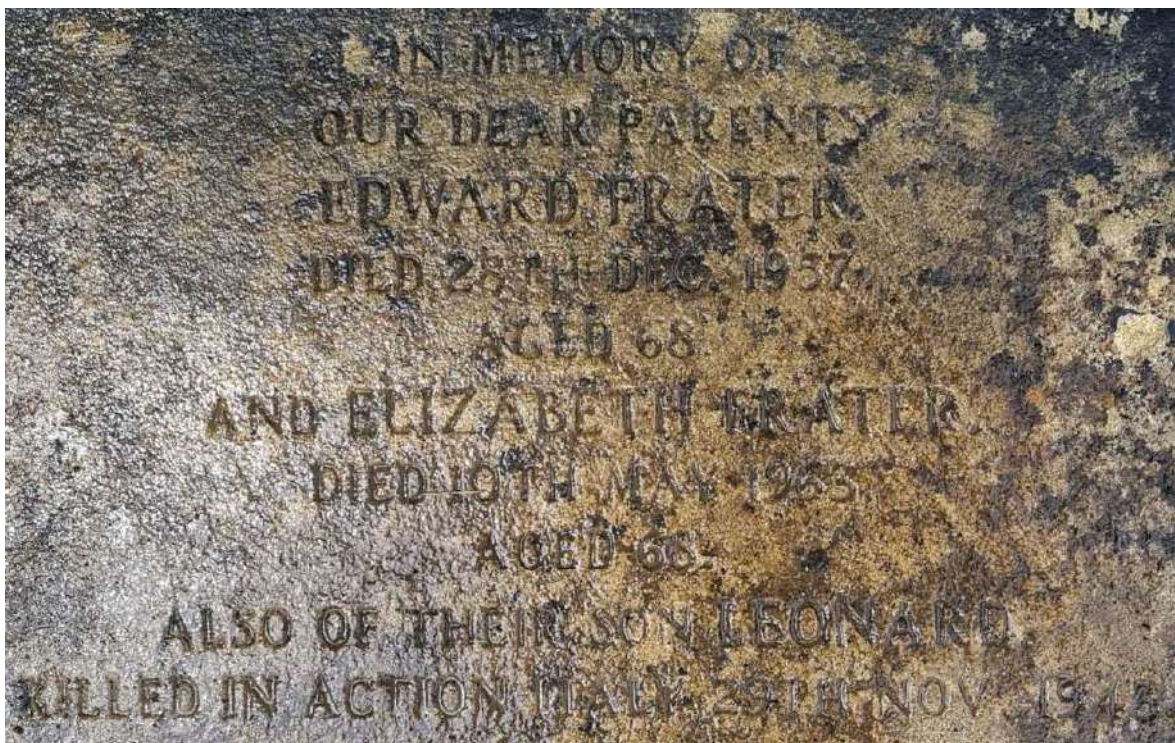
Today has been especially profound. My collaboration with Declan Owens in the Llandry Cemetery memorial documentation has yielded rich rewards. Simultaneously, my exploration of ancestral roots through Findagrave has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. In a remarkable twist of fate, I embarked on a mission to restore their stories.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance. humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave. It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

It is from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19th November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR PARENTS
EDWARD FRATER
DIED 29TH DEC 1957
AGED 68.
AND ELIZABETH FRATER
DIED 10TH MAY 1963
AGED 68
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed

Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55914830/leonard-frater#add-to-vc>

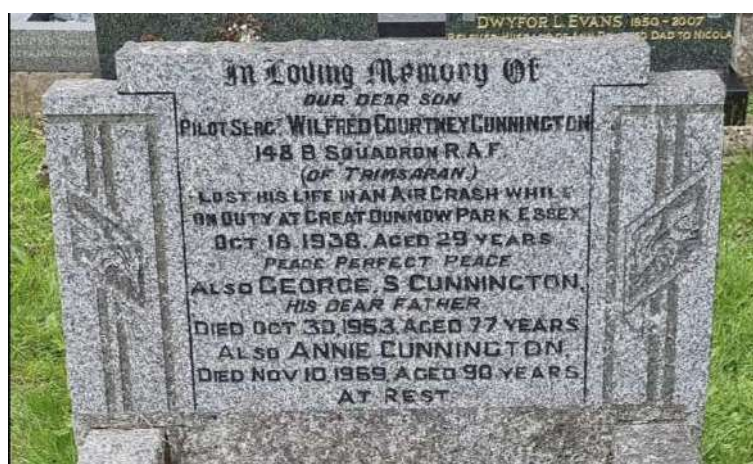
Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

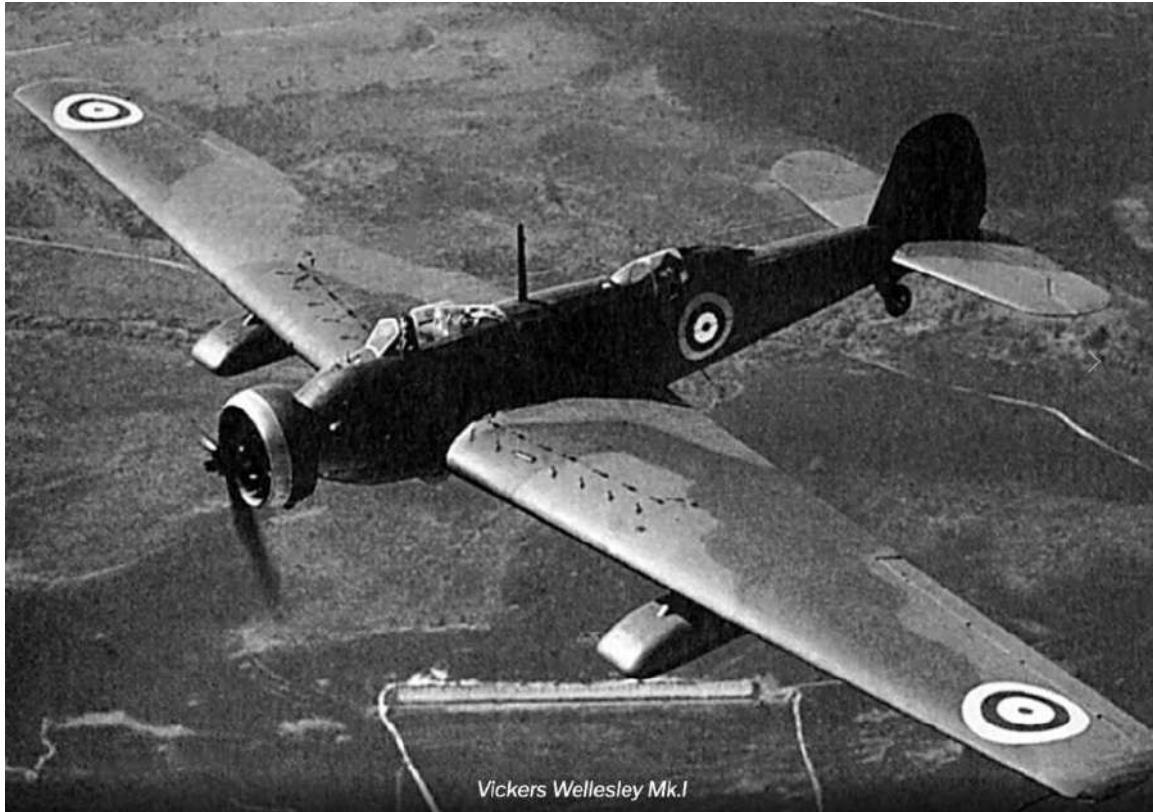
The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

In Loving Memory of
OUR DEAR SON
PILOT SERGEANT WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON
148 B SQUADRON RAF
(OF TRIMSARAN)
LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE
ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX
OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS
PEACE PERFECT PEACE"



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/257664361/wilfred-courtney-cunnington>



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

The Hughes Brothers: A Family's Sacrifice

The next step in my journey came from a chance comment during a meeting of the Kidwelly British Legion. As preparations began for the upcoming D-Day commemorations in 2024, someone asked, "*Does anyone know anything about the Hughes brothers?*" That question stayed with me—and led me to uncover a story that deserves to be remembered.

What I found was heart-breaking.

The Hughes family of Kidwelly endured unimaginable grief during the Great War. John and Margaret Hughes lost not one, but three sons—William, Samuel, and David—all of whom answered the call to serve their country, and all of whom made the ultimate sacrifice. Their stories are a poignant reminder of the personal cost of war, and the quiet heroism of families who bore its weight.

William Henry Hughes

Private William Henry Hughes, No. 35648, Machine Gun Corps Born in Kidwelly in 1886, William was the eldest of the three brothers. He married Mary Anne Morgan in 1906, and they lived at 52 Water Street, Kidwelly. At the outbreak of war, William enlisted in Carmarthen into the Gloucestershire Regiment, later transferring to the 5th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps, attached to the 5th Division.

This division played a significant role in the Somme Offensive, engaging in fierce battles at High Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, and Le Transloy. After suffering heavy casualties, the division moved to Festubert in October 1916, remaining there until March 1917. William was killed in action on 16 April 1917 during the Battle of Vimy. He is commemorated at the Bois-Carre British Cemetery in Thelus, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56183210/william_henry-hughes

Samuel Hughes

Private Samuel Hughes, No. 12535, Royal Welsh Fusiliers Samuel married Beatrice Jones in 1912, and they lived at 14 Gwendraeth Town, Kidwelly. He enlisted in Llanelli into the 8th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, part of the 40th Brigade, 13th (Western) Division. His unit saw extensive action in Gallipoli, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

It was in Mesopotamia that Samuel fell ill. Despite returning home for treatment, he died of sickness on 12 March 1918, aged just 27. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Kidwelly—his final resting place in the town he called home.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/211538467/samuel-hughes>

David Hughes

David Hughes was the son of John and Margaret Hughes of Kidwelly. He married Mary Emily Musk in 1907 at Seven Sisters, and the couple lived at 20 Bryndulais Row, Seven Sisters. Before the war, David worked at the Yniscedwen Tinsplate Works in Ystalyfera.

He enlisted at Ystradgynlais into the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. His battalion began its wartime service in China, where they successfully captured the German garrison at Tientsin. Following this, they returned to England and joined the 87th Brigade, 29th Division.

The Division was then deployed to Gallipoli via Egypt, landing on 25 April 1915. They remained in Gallipoli until the evacuation to Egypt on 11 January 1916. From there, they moved to the Western Front on 15 March 1916.

David was killed in action on 6 April 1916, during the battalion's first spell in the trenches. He was 30 years old. He is buried at Mesnil Ridge Cemetery in Mesnil Martinsart, France.

David was one of three brothers from the Hughes family who lost their lives in the Great War a tragic testament to the depth of sacrifice borne by so many families.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58988842/d-hughes>

A Legacy of Bravery

The story of the Hughes brothers is not just a tale of military service it is a testament to the quiet courage of a family who gave everything. Their names may be etched in stone, but their memory lives on in the hearts of those who continue to honour their sacrifice.

Their story is one of many I've uncovered each one a thread in the tapestry of remembrance that continues to grow. And it all began with a simple question.

The Kidwelly War Memorial 100th Anniversary

The next phase of my journey was sparked by the 100th anniversary of the Kidwelly War Memorial. During a visit to St Mary's Church, I noticed two memorial plaques on the church walls one for the First World War, the other for the Second. I stood there, looking at the names carved in stone, and found myself asking: *Who were these men?*

They were just names. No stories. No faces. That moment stirred something in me I wanted to know more.

It was the beginning of my learning curve. I had no formal training, no research background. Just a mobile phone in my hand. I took photographs of the memorials and began to dig. What started as a simple act of curiosity quickly became a two-year quest not only into memorial research, but into the history of the RAF and the lives behind the inscriptions.

Unintentionally at first, I began to teach myself how to gather data, cross-reference records, and use digital tools to uncover forgotten stories. That quiet moment in St Mary's Church became the foundation of everything that followed.

To the Glory of God and in memory of the fallen from this Parish. 1914-1919



IN HONOURED MEMORY
OF
THE MEN OF THIS PARISH
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE WAR
1939-45



What a pleasure—and a humbling experience—it has been to research these men. As I uncovered their stories, I found myself developing new skills I never expected to learn. At the time, I didn't realise where this path would lead. What began as a simple act of curiosity became a journey of discovery... and ultimately, a journey of knowledge.

Through this work, I've come to understand that remembrance is not just about the fallen. It's about the families left behind. The communities forever changed. And the countless quiet acts of bravery carried out in the face of hardship.

Kidwelly was the beginning. And it taught me that every name carved in stone carries a story waiting to be told.

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Fallen-Hero>



All of the above entries were carefully researched and edited for accuracy and clarity, then integrated into *Find A Grave* memorials. Where appropriate, I submitted corrections and additions—99% of which were accepted as accurate by the platform.

To enrich each tribute, I also used AI tools to enhance the historical context, particularly focusing on the battles and campaigns occurring on the day everyone died.

This allowed me to place their sacrifice within a broader narrative, giving depth to their stories and honouring their service with greater understanding.

Kidwelly War Memorials World Cemeteries



"This was the moment I realised I could use my map-making skills to trace where each serviceman was buried or commemorated giving their stories a place on the landscape as well as in memory.

It came quite naturally to me. I'd already developed those skills through years of travelling, wandering the length and breadth of the UK with Google MyMaps as my companion. What had once helped me explore the country now became a tool for honouring its history."

From Alexandria (Chatby) Military Cemetery to the Tower Hill Memorial in London

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-War-Cemeteries-Map>



RAF Crash Research: A Question That Changed Everything

What began for me as a passing question about a wartime plane crash grew into something much deeper—a connection to place, to people, and to a history I never expected to find so compelling.

It's surprising how a simple question can open the door to an entirely new realm of research. That moment came in 2024, when Seimon Pugh-Jones—a military historian and curator of a mobile military museum—asked me: “*Have you ever heard of a plane crashing on the mountain near Pwll?*”

That question set me on a path of deep investigation. I wanted to know what happened, where it happened, and how. But I had no idea it would lead me to document and log every RAF aircraft crash in Wales.

The aircraft in question, named *Mi Laine*, was caught in thick fog on 4 June 1943 while descending in search of a safe landing site. Tragically, it flew into a hay barn at Penrhyn Farm in Pwll, near Llanelli, and exploded on impact.

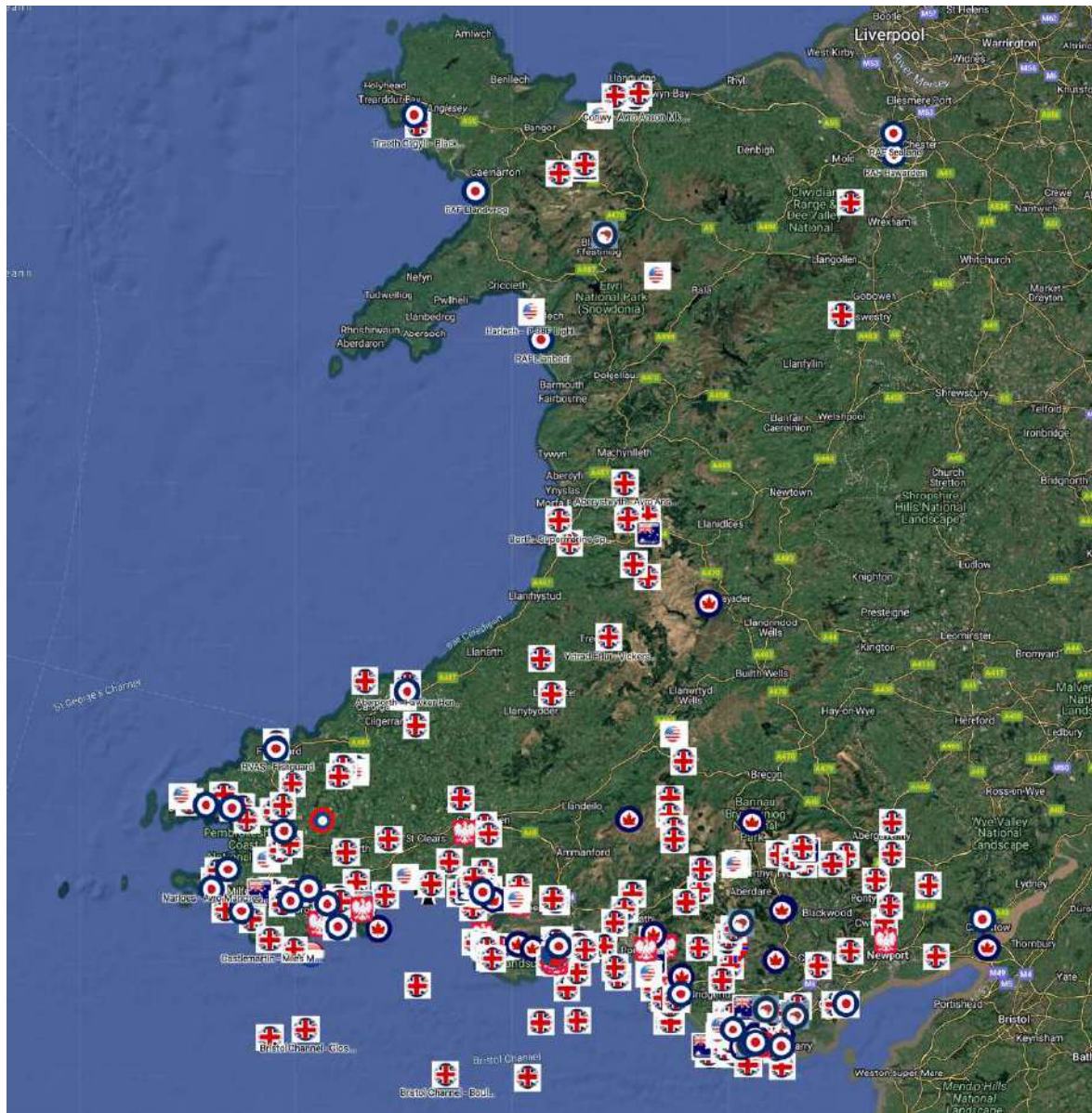
According to the official report, the *B-26 Marauder* was on a squadron transfer flight from Port Lyautey, Morocco, to RAF St Eval in Cornwall. The crash occurred at approximately 16:15 hours, three miles southeast of RAF Pembrey. The aircraft was assigned to the VIII Air Force Bomber Command, 322nd Bomb Group, 449th Bomb Squadron.



<https://tinyurl.com/B26-Bomber-Crash> (link opens in new window)



Mapping RAF Losses Across Wales



The crash of Mi Laine B26 Marauder began mapping each location using **Google MyMaps**, researching crash reports, identifying the airmen who perished during training, and logging their graves in *Find A Grave*. From there, I created a **Virtual Cemetery** a digital space to honour everyone, complete with interactive links that guide the reader through their stories.

Much of the data was supported by two key sources:

- The **Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) Project 126: Military Aircraft Crash Sites in South Wales** (March 2013)
- **Dyfed Archaeological Trust**
- The **Polish Fighter Squadron 316 Project** based in Llanelli.

Together, these resources offered comprehensive insights into South Wales's aviation history and the impact of wartime conflict on its landscape.

To achieve this, I drew on a wide range of tools:

- **ChatGPT AI**, to help interpret and contextualize crash data.
- **Google Lens**, to extract text from scanned crash reports and archival images.
- The **Scottish Library's historical map database**, to locate crash sites using vintage cartography.
- A **side-by-side map feature**, displaying 1945 maps of the event date on the left and modern maps on the right, which helped identify locations that no longer exist in today's terrain.

One example stands out: a witness report stated that a plane had crashed "one mile northeast of a certain farm." Using the historical map, I located the farm's original position. Then, in **Google Earth**, I rotated the view so that northeast aligned correctly. I used the measuring tool, set to miles, and marked one mile northeast from the farm's location. This gave me an accurate GPS coordinate for the crash site.

This is how I've combined historical records, modern mapping, and digital tools to uncover and preserve these forgotten stories. Each crash site is more than a point on a map it's a place of memory, now rediscovered.

<https://tinyurl.com/WW2-SW-CS>



<https://tinyurl.com/WW2-Crash-Reports> (link opens in new window)



<https://tinyurl.com/RAF-WW2-Wales-Memorials>



Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project



The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project began with a simple but profound observation: not all those who served and died in wartime were fully represented on public memorials.

What initially appeared to be complete records revealed omissions individuals commemorated only on headstones, in church plaques, or in family records, but absent from the central monuments in Pembrey and Burry Port.

This realisation marked the beginning of a sustained and methodical effort to restore visibility and dignity to those overlooked. The project began with field visits to local cemeteries and churches, where names were transcribed, photographed, and cross-referenced with archival

sources. Using digital tools such as Find A Grave, each individual was researched, verified, and documented with biographical detail, burial information, and historical context.

As the work progressed, it became clear that traditional methods alone could not capture the full scope of remembrance. To address this, the project integrated modern mapping technologies, notably Google MyMaps, to create an interactive memorial landscape.

Each serviceman's burial or commemorative site was geo-tagged, linked to their digital memorial, and annotated with QR codes, plot numbers, and contextual notes. This allowed for a layered experience one that combined physical location with historical narrative.

The project also embraced bilingual documentation, ensuring accessibility for both English and Welsh-speaking communities. Translation tools and AI-assisted research were employed to interpret inscriptions and enhance the accuracy of historical data. Where discrepancies were found, corrections were submitted to Find A Grave, with a 99% acceptance rate, affirming the reliability and depth of the research.

What began as a local initiative has evolved into a comprehensive and inclusive model of memorialisation. The project now stands as a living archive one that not only preserves history but invites engagement.

It has been recognised by heritage professionals, clergy, and members of the British Legion for its originality and emotional resonance. By blending fieldwork, archival precision, and digital innovation, the Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project offers a new standard for community remembrance.

It is, at its core, a tribute: to those who served, to the families who endured loss, and to the communities shaped by conflict. And it continues to grow—not as a finished record, but as an open invitation to remember more fully, more accurately, and more compassionately.

<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Memorials-Ledger-Master-FV>



<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Virtual-Cemetery>



Project Summary: Mapping Memory and Restoring Identity

This work represents the culmination of a multi-year, multi-disciplinary effort to document, preserve, and honour the lives of those who served and sacrificed during wartime particularly those whose stories have been overlooked or fragmented across time. Through a combination of fieldwork, archival research, digital mapping, and collaborative outreach, the project has evolved into a comprehensive and inclusive model of memorialisation.

Beginning with the memorials of Kidwelly and expanding into the **Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project**, the research uncovered individuals missing from public monuments and restored their presence through updated biographies, geo-tagged grave records, and bilingual documentation. The project also includes a distinct tribute to **Merchant Navy personnel**, recognising their unique service and commemorating them as a separate entity within the broader memorial framework.

A pivotal chapter emerged in 2024, when a question about a wartime plane crash near Pwll led to the creation of a **digital map of RAF training crash sites across Wales**. This initiative documented over 280 aircrew casualties, integrating crash reports, burial data, and GPS coordinates into an interactive platform. Data was drawn from key sources including the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT 126) and the Polish Fighter Squadron 316 Project, and enhanced through tools such as Google MyMaps, Find A Grave, historical map overlays, and AI-assisted interpretation.

The result is a **living archive** a digital memorial landscape that blends emotional resonance with technical precision. It offers a new standard for remembrance: one that is accessible, accurate, and deeply human. It honours not only the fallen, but the communities shaped by their loss, and the quiet acts of remembrance that continue to echo across generations.

This work is not a conclusion, but a foundation. It invites others to engage, contribute, and carry forward the mission of inclusive remembrance. It stands as a testament to what can be achieved when curiosity meets compassion, and when history is approached not just as record—but as responsibility.

<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-T-Emmanuel-PCW>



<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-Emmanuel-Profile>



Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

*A Blueprint for
21st-Century Remembrance*



Introduction: From Idea to Innovation

What began as a simple effort to record and preserve the stories behind our community's war memorials has evolved into something far greater a world-first in digital remembrance.

Over two years of research, mapping, and collaboration have transformed a personal project into a pioneering model that bridges traditional craftsmanship with modern technology.

This is the story behind that journey one whose true significance only became clear upon its fruition.

At the heart of this achievement is what has come to be known as a *Fourth-Generation Memorial* the next step in how we remember.

Earlier generations of remembrance relied on stone monuments, written archives, or online records, but this new approach unites them all.

By embedding a weather resistant QR code directly into the granite monument, visitors can access verified biographies, photographs, service histories, and global burial locations in seconds.

This innovation transforms remembrance from something static into something living, interactive, and enduring allowing every engraved name to connect with its full story.

Through the support of local partners, the Town Council, and the People's Collection of Wales, the project ensures that memory, identity, and sacrifice will remain visible, meaningful, and preserved for generations to come.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel



I am a dedicated historical researcher and digital curator; I am passionate about preserving and sharing our past's rich tapestry. My work involves uncovering historical data from sources such as archaeological reports and books and curating it into comprehensive digital formats. By integrating maps, images, and interactive elements, I create immersive experiences that allow individuals to explore history in a personal and engaging way.

My research spans a diverse range of subjects, including religious sites, World War I and II memorials, RAF crash sites, local history, and family heritage. Through meticulous linking of specific items, I strive to bring history to life, enabling meaningful and interactive connections with the past.

To support my research, I utilise a variety of technologies, including mobile phone applications for scanning historical documents, AI tools for editing and translation, and specialised apps for documenting grave memorials and collecting historical data during site visits. I share my findings through platforms like Findagrave and Ancestry, aiding others in connecting with their heritage and uncovering valuable information. Additionally, I create custom Google My Maps that complement specific topics, providing an interactive and visual exploration of historical locations and events.

While my approach to historical research embraces modern technology, a departure from traditional methods, I believe it is essential for making history accessible and engaging. I am committed to leveraging digital tools to share historical treasures with a wider audience, as exemplified by my contributions to The People's Collection of Wales.

Through my work, I aim to inspire others to explore and engage with the past in new and immersive ways.

<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-Emmanuel-Profile>



The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

A Blueprint for 21st-Century Remembrance



This document outlines the **Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project**, a globally pioneering initiative that redefines the preservation of community sacrifice through the integration of traditional monument design and advanced digital heritage architecture. The project moves beyond static commemoration to create a dynamic, accessible, and perpetually enduring system of memory.

<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Memorials-PCW-QR-Link>



I. The Core Innovation: A Fourth-Generation Memorial

The project introduces and validates the concept of a **Fourth-Generation Memorial**, an architectural model that ensures both physical permanence and digital longevity.

- **Integrated Design:** A traditional granite monument is seamlessly united with a custom-fabricated, weather-resistant **porcelain-inlaid QR code**.
- **National Archival Security:** This code links directly to a secure, verified digital archive hosted on **People's Collection Wales**, a national heritage repository. This crucial partnership guarantees the long-term preservation and accessibility of the data, securing the legacy against future technological obsolescence.
- **Interactive Access:** Visitors are taken beyond engraved names to access rich, **geo-mapped service records, biographies, and global commemoration sites**, illustrating the international reach of local sacrifice.

II. Global Distinction and Strategic Value

Independent analysis confirms that this project is unique on a global scale. No other community or national institution has successfully merged this level of:

Element	Significance
Verified Biographical Data	Ensures the historical accuracy and integrity of the archival content.
Geo-Linked Global Records	Connects the local community to cemeteries and memorials worldwide via interactive mapping.
National Heritage Hosting	Safeguards the entire digital ecosystem within a public, non-commercial, and nationally validated archive.

III. Legacy and Replicable Model

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is not only a tribute but a **validated, replicable blueprint** for communities and heritage institutions globally.

The methodology a rigorous blend of **heritage research, geospatial mapping, and archival preservation** provides a structured approach for translating local history into a verifiable, accessible digital asset. By demonstrating that remembrance can evolve without compromising dignity or tradition, the project positions Wales as a leader in innovative cultural preservation and digital heritage architecture.

This system ensures that memory, identity, and sacrifice remain meaningful and accessible for future generations, transforming a physical monument into a **living, educational, and emotional experience**.

This summary focuses on the key takeaways—the innovation (Fourth-Generation model), the security (National Hosting), and the impact (Global Distinction, Replicable Blueprint).

A Personal Journey in Digital Remembrance

From Maps to Memory

What began as a practical solution learning to use Google My Maps to avoid getting lost in Ireland unfolded into a profound, multi-year journey of discovery, innovation, and legacy-building.

Initially, the focus was simple: documenting cemeteries and tracing family history. This led to the integration of research into platforms like Find A Grave, where individual memorials could be updated with verified biographies, service records, and photographs. The creation of virtual cemeteries followed digital spaces where family data could be collated, preserved, and easily accessed for future research.

As mapping skills deepened, so did the vision. Family migration patterns were visualised through geospatial data, transforming static genealogies into dynamic, interactive histories. This ability to place lives on a map literally opened new doors. War memorials, once seen as lists of names carved in stone, became entry points into global stories. Mapping these memorials added a visual arm to remembrance, allowing researchers and families to see, in real time, where individuals served, fell, and are commemorated.



Each step built upon the last:

- From navigation to documentation
- From documentation to integration
- From integration to visualisation
- From visualisation to remembrance

The result is a living, evolving system of memory one that honours the past while embracing the tools of the present. Through this process, a community's sacrifice has been made visible, accessible, and permanent. And in doing so, a new model of remembrance has quietly emerged: participatory, dignified, and deeply human.

Without realising it, this journey has created something truly special a blueprint for how love, loss, and legacy can be preserved not just in stone, but in story, map, and memory.

Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

A World-First in Community-Led Digital Remembrance

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is a pioneering initiative that redefines how communities remember their war dead. By bridging traditional memorial design with modern digital technology, the project introduces a new model of remembrance that is both enduring and interactive. At its centre stands a granite memorial core, into which a porcelain inlaid QR code crafted in Italy for permanence and weather resistance has been embedded. This code links directly to a digital archive hosted on People's Collection Wales, a national heritage platform.

Visitors who scan the code are taken beyond the engraved names to explore a rich, evolving archive of individual stories, verified service records, photographs, and global burial or commemoration sites. Each entry is geo-mapped, illustrating how the sacrifices of a local community resonate across the world.

A New Generation of Remembrance

The project represents a first-of-its-kind approach to public memorialisation, seamlessly uniting:

- A traditional stone monument
- A permanent, interactive digital archive





This integration allows visitors to move from the physical presence of engraved names to detailed digital biographies that include:

- Verified service histories.
- Photographs and family details
- Burial or commemoration sites across the globe
- Geo-mapped locations connecting Carmarthenshire to international fields of remembrance.

The digital archive is safeguarded by People's Collection Wales, ensuring long-term accessibility and preservation.

Fourth-Generation Memorial Design

The project introduces a new architectural and conceptual model of remembrance, defined by:

-  Field research and archival verification
-  Global geo-mapping of burial and memorial sites
-  Integration with national heritage databases
-  A weather-resistant, porcelain QR interface embedded in granite

This structure forms what is increasingly recognised in heritage discourse as a **fourth-generation memorial** a living, interactive system that combines physical permanence with digital depth.

Unlike QR codes applied to individual plaques or headstones, this initiative creates a unified, interconnected network. Every recorded and previously unrecorded individual is linked to a central digital record, forming a cohesive and expandable remembrance ecosystem.

Methodology and Development

The project evolved over several years through a process of research, experimentation, and collaboration. Its methodology blends:

- In-depth heritage research
- Digital mapping and geo-referencing
- Archival preservation practices
- Partnerships with national and local heritage organisations

This approach offers a replicable model for communities worldwide, ensuring that local histories and personal sacrifices are preserved—regardless of future technological change.

Independent Validation: A Globally Distinctive Model

External analysis has confirmed the project's global uniqueness, identifying several key innovations:

1. Bridging Physical and Digital Remembrance

Where most memorials focus on either physical monuments or digital archives, this project unites both:

- A granite core memorial with a porcelain QR code
- Direct linkage to a national heritage repository (People's Collection Wales)

This level of integration is rare, even among national remembrance institutions, and unprecedented at the community level.

2. Creating a Living, Global Network

The project builds a geo-linked digital ecosystem:

- Each record includes a verified biography and service data.
- Geo-mapping connects Llanelli, Pembrey, and Burry Port to cemeteries and memorials worldwide.
- Integration with platforms such as Find A Grave and interactive mapping tools transforms remembrance into immersive, place-based storytelling

This is not merely memorialisation it is **digital heritage architecture**.

3. Global Distinction

As noted in the project’s documentation:

“To the best of our knowledge... no other memorial project combines this level of interconnected data and digital depth.”

Legacy and Impact

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is more than a tribute—it is a blueprint for the future of remembrance. It honours the past while embracing the tools of the present, ensuring that memory, identity, and sacrifice remain accessible and meaningful for generations to come.

While some memorials have adopted QR codes on plaques or individual headstones, none documented by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Imperial War Museums, or the Smithsonian’s “Stories Beyond the Stone” project have:

- Merged verified biographical data.
- With linked global burial records
- With interactive mapping
- All hosted within a national heritage collection rather than a private platform.

This comprehensive integration sets the project apart on a global scale.

Cultural and Philosophical Significance

The project demonstrates that remembrance can evolve without compromising dignity or tradition. It preserves the solemnity of memorial design while introducing digital accessibility, making remembrance:

- Permanent
- Interactive
- Inclusive

This ensures that families, schools, and visitors—now and in the centuries to come—can stand before the memorial, scan the QR code, and access every story, every face, every name, all preserved in a verified national archive.

A New Heritage Paradigm

In heritage terms, the project exemplifies what is increasingly referred to as a “**fourth-generation memorial**”, a concept gaining traction in museum and digital heritage research:

1. **First generation:** Physical monuments (cenotaphs, plaques)
2. **Second generation:** Archival lists and registries (e.g., CWGC, IWM databases)
3. **Third generation:** Online memorial websites
4. **Fourth generation:** Integrated digital–physical memorials (as exemplified by this project)

Remarkably, this model has been realised at community level—well ahead of many larger institutions.

Conclusion

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project stands as a landmark in remembrance culture. It is:

- Technologically advanced
- Culturally significant
- Educationally valuable
- Emotionally powerful

Its structure and execution are unique on a global scale, offering a transformative vision of how communities can honour their past while building a legacy for the future.



Virtue Lives On After Death

Graham Tudor Emmanuel 2025

Introduction

The Journey of Grief is a deeply personal account of loss, renewal, and unexpected discovery, written by Graham Emmanuel in the years following the death of his wife, Linda Emmanuel.

Linda (26 April 1963 – 4 July 2015) passed away at the University Hospital of Wales after a relentless battle with a brain tumour, aged just 52. Married since 10 October 1981, she and Graham shared 34 years together and raised four children. Linda devoted much of her life to caring for others, serving as a Short Break Carer for Carmarthenshire’s respite service from 2006. Her compassion and commitment were recognised with a pottery jug inscribed “*One in a Million – Linda Loved and Remembered Always.*” In keeping with her generous spirit, the family donated the funeral collection to *Week on the Street*, a local charity supporting autistic children.

Graham’s own journey through grief began with Linda’s final words: that he could love again, should not remarry, and must “go and travel.” For nearly three years he struggled to find direction, until a trip to Ireland in April 2018 sparked a profound shift. Encouraged by his daughter, he welcomed a small companion dog, Lizzy—a lively Jug—into his life just two months after Linda’s passing. Together, Graham and Lizzy travelled the Wild Atlantic Way in 2018 and 2019, with the sweeping view from Healy Pass in County Cork marking a turning point in his healing and rediscovery of purpose.

The global pandemic of 2020 led Graham down another unexpected path: researching his family history. What began as a quiet project soon revealed stories of resilience, sacrifice, and tragedy. His work documenting cemetery memorials at Llandyry Church, Sardis Chapel, and beyond uncovered the lives of men who served, suffered, and were lost—among them:

- **Leonard Frater**, killed in action in Italy on 29 November 1943, aged 20
- **Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington**, killed in an air crash in Essex on 18 October 1938, aged 29
- **Battery Serjeant-Major Richard George Hancock**, who died on active service in Egypt on 14 November 1942
- **Private Griffith Lloyd**, a Trimsaran gamekeeper, killed in France on 28 March 1918, aged 28
- **Lance Corporal Ivor Emanuel**, killed during the Battle of Loos on 27 September 1915, aged 23
- **Private Charles Harries**, killed at the Battle of Festubert on 21 May 1915, aged 27
- **Captain Joseph Vincent Hutchings**, who fell on 9 June 1944, aged 32
- And the **ten men**, including **Thomas David (1854–1923)**, who lost their lives in the Trimsaran Colliery disaster of 26 April 1923.

These discoveries—woven through grief, travel, memory, and history—form the foundation of *The Journey of Grief*: a testament not only to personal loss, but to the enduring human stories waiting to be found in the landscapes and memorials around us.

One Special Woman.



In the heart of summer, on the 4th of July in 2015, my world was shattered as I said goodbye to the love of my life, Linda. She had battled a relentless brain tumour with unwavering courage and grace, but in the end, it was a battle that even her incredible spirit couldn't conquer. Her absence left a void in my life, and I found myself navigating the tumultuous seas of grief, unsure of where to anchor my emotions.

For nearly three years, I carried the weight of my loss, wrestling with memories and grappling with the reality of her absence. The pain was a constant companion, and I wondered if I would ever find a way to move forward, to heal.

Then, on a seemingly ordinary day in April 2018, everything changed. It was the 17th of the month, and I was far from home, traveling through the enchanting landscapes of Ireland. As I explored the rolling hills, ancient ruins, and vibrant cities, I stumbled upon something unexpected – a renewed sense of purpose and a connection to life

that I had long thought lost. In the serenity of those moments, I felt Linda's presence, as if she were guiding me towards a new path.

However, life had more challenges in store for all of us in the years to come. The global pandemic of 2020 and its far-reaching consequences forced me to shift my focus once more. With travel restrictions and isolation, I turned my attention to a different journey - researching my family tree. As I delved into the fascinating twists and turns of my lineage, I discovered stories of resilience, love, and triumph, as well as mysteries and surprises that both intrigued and perplexed me.

This is my story – a journey of profound loss, unexpected renewal, and the unearthing of the past. In the pages that follow, I hope to share the highs and lows of my life, the lessons I've learned, and the connections that have sustained me through it all.

The July 4, 2015, a day forever etched in my memory, the clock struck 2 am at the University Hospital of Wales. There, surrounded by my four children, I held my wife Linda's delicate left hand, knowing that the time had come for her to depart from us forever.

In that surreal moment, we watched her silently, unable to hear her gentle breaths, unsure if she had already slipped away. Then, as I clutched her hand, once soft and warm, now cold, and lifeless, I knew that my beloved Linda had lost her battle for life. Never again would we be graced by the sound of her beautiful voice.

At that moment, reality seemed elusive, and the weight of what had just occurred bore heavily upon us. We had imagined that one goes to the hospital, recovers from their illness, and eventually returns home. But when that outcome doesn't materialize, one is left adrift, unsure of what steps to take.

In the first two weeks following Linda's passing, I found myself in a state of quietude and confusion. I was grappling with a sense of uncertainty, and the grief, when it finally hit me, brought forth an overwhelming pain, unlike anything I had ever experienced. It is a pain that defies explanation, one that can only be truly understood by those who have walked the same path.

During my anguish, I found solace in the words Linda had shared with me just before her departure. She told me that I could love again but cautioned against remarriage. We exchanged smiles, and then she uttered the profound words, "You know what you must do now. Go and travel."

Two months later, my daughter, sensing my struggling state, suggested that I have a dog as a companion. And so, Lizzy, a Jug—a delightful mix of Jack Russell and Pug—entered my life. Little did I know then the profound impact she would have, forever changing my trajectory.

Initially, Lizzy and I set off without a clear destination or purpose. We roamed aimlessly, staying at different places for a night before moving on. I was trying to shield myself from the world, creating a cocoon with just me and my dog, avoiding groups and human connection.

This pattern continued until I stumbled upon a group meeting, where I finally encountered fellow travellers who shared my circumstances. It was a turning point in my journey of grief. For the longest time, whenever I spoke about Linda, a wave of tears would overcome me, rendering me unable to control my emotions. But during this gathering, a kind woman reassured me, urging me not to apologize for my tears. She encouraged me to let the pain flow, emphasizing that it was an integral part of my healing process.

Her words shifted my perspective, allowing me to embrace my grief as a necessary step toward finding inner peace. Over nearly two years, I gradually learned to navigate the waves of sorrow, acknowledging that shedding tears for my beloved Linda was not a sign of weakness, but rather a cathartic release of the pain that resided within me.

And so, my journey continued—a journey of grief, healing, and self-discovery. The memory of Linda remained a cherished part of me, and with each tear shed, I grew stronger, inching closer to the peace I sought.

"In life, there is always that special person who shapes who you are, who helps determine the person you become."

Little did I know that from that day you would be such an influence on my life.

Little did I know how you guided me to being a good man without me even knowing it.

Little did I know how big your heart was. Little did I know that I was to lose you so young.

In the year 1981, I stood at the altar, ready to embark on a journey of love and companionship with the woman who would soon become my wife. Little did I know then just how extraordinary she would turn out to be.

Over the course of many years, she weaved her way into the lives of those around her, leaving an indelible mark that would forever shape their paths. Modest and humble, she never recognized her own exceptional qualities, but to me and countless others, she was a shining star, radiating love and warmth.

Her presence will endure in our memories, and her legacy will precede her, as it rightfully should. Linda, the depths of my love for you are immeasurable. It is a love that has only grown stronger with the passing of time.

Losing someone you hold dear is an experience that unveils the true magnitude of your love for them. As the years have unfolded, I have come to understand the depths of my affection for Linda on a profound level. Her absence fuels my determination to carry on, to seek out the inner peace that eludes me.

I am resolute in my pursuit of that serene place, where one day, I will be reunited with my beloved for eternity. There isn't a single day that goes by without me missing her presence, yearning for the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand.

Love, in its truest form, reveals its strength and depth in the face of loss. As time has passed, my love for Linda has only deepened, and I know it will continue to do so. She serves as a guiding force, propelling me forward on this journey to find inner peace.

With every step I take, I am confident that I will uncover that tranquil solace I seek. And when the time is right, our souls will intertwine once more, embarking on an eternal union.

In moments like these, I find myself being too hard on myself. But the love I had for Linda was immeasurable, beyond any quantifiable measure.

I can almost hear her now, playfully telling me to "get a grip, Graham!" Her voice still echoes in my mind, bringing a smile to my face even in the toughest times.

Today, I have come to understand the profound truth that love is the most significant thing in my life. How can one possibly measure something so powerful? Love can both heal and hurt, leaving its mark on our hearts, minds, and souls.

When true love finds its way to your life, it is something to be cherished and held tightly. The chance to experience such a love may never come again. It is a treasure that must be grasped with both hands.

Sometimes in life, we embark on a journey without knowing precisely what we are seeking. Yet, it is in the act of starting that we discover the true essence of the journey itself. We may find ourselves unable to see the bigger picture, caught amidst the intricacies of the present moment. But in those times, we must have faith and believe. We must acknowledge the blessings of who we are and what we have.

Life begins with grand expectations, but it is through learning and making mistakes that we truly grow. Mistakes are the steppingstones to wisdom, and they pave the way for progress. I have made my fair share of mistakes along the way, except for one—I never faltered in loving you. Regrettably, you are no longer by my side.

As I continue this journey called life, I carry the lessons learned from my missteps and the enduring love I hold for you. Your absence is felt deeply, but your love remains a guiding light, inspiring me to persevere and make the most of each day. And while you may be far from sight, I will always seek you among the stars, shining brightly on Christmas night.

Throughout our lives, we encounter numerous individuals, each with their own unique qualities and characteristics. Among them, there are those who stand out, who possess an inexplicable aura that captivates us from the start.

These special people have a way of making us smile, filling our hearts with joy. Their absence leaves us feeling incomplete, as if a part of us is missing. We come to realize that these individuals are our soulmates, the ones we have been searching for. Finding them may happen early in life or may take a lifetime of searching, but rest assured, there is one out there who is meant for each of us.

For me, that person was Linda. She was the one who touched my soul and ignited a flame within me. Her presence brought immense happiness and a sense of completeness that I had never experienced before. Linda was my soulmate, the one I had been longing for all along.

The connection we shared was beyond words, and the love we had for each other was profound. Linda filled my life with warmth, laughter, and an overwhelming sense of belonging. Her absence is deeply felt, and the void she left behind serves as a constant reminder of the love we shared.

In this vast journey of life, it is a true blessing to find that one person who completes us. Linda was that person for me, and I will forever cherish the time we had together. She will always hold a special place in my heart, for she was not just a person I met along the way, but my soulmate, my love, and my everything.

Grief has a way of stripping away the superficial layers and revealing the core of who we truly are. It has the power to shape our perspective and redefine our understanding of home.

For Linda, the concept of home extended far beyond the physical confines of a house. It transcended the walls and the address. To her, home was wherever we

found ourselves together. Throughout our married life, we embarked on various relocations, but it was never the structure or the location that held the essence of home for us.

I can vividly recall the words she spoke to me, expressing her unwavering devotion. She said, "I don't care if we have nothing more than a humble caravan to call our own, as long as I am by your side." Her words resonated deeply within me, for they revealed the depth of her love and the true meaning of home.

Our hearts became the compass that guided us. If we were together, we felt a sense of belonging and warmth that no physical dwelling could ever replicate. It was in each other's presence that we discovered a sense of security, comfort, and true fulfilment.

Even in her absence, Linda's spirit continues to remind me of the importance of cherishing the moments we shared and the unconditional love we embraced. Home, for us, will forever reflect the love we cultivated and the bond we nurtured.

Grief may have altered our lives, but it has also illuminated the essence of our connection. It has shown me the depth of my love and the resilience of my spirit. Through the journey of grief, I have come to understand that home is not confined to a physical space but resides within the heart, forever intertwined with the love we shared.

In honouring Linda's memory, I carry the knowledge that home will always be wherever our hearts reside, united in a love that transcends time and space.

Have you ever experienced a moment in your life that seemed ordinary at the time, unaware of its significance? It is often in hindsight, after that person is no longer with us, that we come to understand just how precious and extraordinary that moment truly was.

During our daily routines, we may overlook the magic unfolding around us. It is when the person who played a significant role in that moment is gone forever that we grasp the magnitude of its impact. We begin to appreciate the depth of its importance and the profound effect it had on our lives.

That single moment, seemingly insignificant at first, has the power to shape our entire existence. It becomes a cherished memory, etched in our hearts for a lifetime. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been a part of such a transformative experience when fate introduced me to a living angel.

In the presence of this extraordinary individual, I witnessed something truly remarkable. Their essence, their spirit, radiated a sense of divinity. They brought light, love, and inspiration into my life. They guided me through challenges and celebrated my triumphs. Little did I know that this encounter would forever change the course of my journey.

As time passes and the absence of this special person lingers, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude. I now understand the immense impact they had on my life, and I hold that moment dear to my heart. It serves as a reminder of the beauty and significance that can be found within the simplest of interactions.

In my eyes, this person is not merely a human being; they are a living angel. Their presence, even if fleeting, has left an indelible mark on my soul. I will forever carry the memory of that transformative moment, cherishing it as a testament to the power of connection and the profound influence one person can have on our lives.

I believe that these encounters are gifts from a higher power, reminding us of the extraordinary nature of the human experience. They serve as reminders to cherish every interaction, to embrace the present moment, and to recognize the divine in those we encounter along our journey.

As I sit here, sipping my cup of tea, my mind drifts back to the past eight years and the profound changes that have shaped my life. It all began when I made the decision to have a custom camper van built, embarking on a journey of travel and self-discovery. Little did I know that this journey would also introduce me to my beloved companion, Lizzy, a delightful Jug—a mix of Jack Russell and Pug.

Initially, I underestimated the challenges that came with owning a camper van. I quickly realized that I was clueless about camping with such a vehicle. One dilemma stood out: how on earth was I supposed to maintain and service the van's toilet? It may sound funny now, but at the time, I felt too embarrassed to ask for help. Thankfully, a quick search on YouTube provided the answers I needed, saving me from any potential mishaps.

With a "suck it and see" mentality, I embarked on my camper van adventures, learning along the way. In that first year, I discovered that I had been carrying unnecessary baggage, both physically and metaphorically. It became evident that my life lacked structure, as I wandered aimlessly from one place to another without truly immersing myself in the beauty and experiences each destination had to offer.

A turning point arrived when Lizzy and I bid farewell to Wales, setting off on a journey with no predetermined destination in mind. We simply drove, hoping that somehow the path would reveal itself. At times, I couldn't help but chastise myself,

urging the need for a plan. But the truth is, grief had cast a shadow over me, leaving me feeling lost and unsure of how to navigate my way forward. Each day became a tentative step, a "suck it and see" approach, hoping that life would unfold before me.

Grief has a way of altering our perspective and leaving us adrift within ourselves. It's a disorienting feeling, not knowing how we'll emerge from its grasp. That's why, during this phase, each day became a blank canvas, awaiting the unpredictable brushstrokes of life.

Yet, amidst the uncertainty, there was a glimmer of hope. With each passing day, I slowly discovered a newfound resilience within myself. I began to chart a course toward healing and self-discovery. Although I didn't have a concrete plan, I allowed life to unfold organically, embracing the unknown and the unexpected.

As I continue my journey, I've come to understand that sometimes the most profound transformations arise from the unplanned moments. Life's uncertainties can lead us down uncharted paths, pushing us to grow and evolve in ways we never anticipated. And so, with a cup of tea in hand and Lizzy by my side, I embrace the unpredictable, knowing that within the uncertainty lies the potential for extraordinary experiences and profound personal growth.

The day I married an Angel.

On the 10th of October 1981, little did I know that I was about to marry an extraordinary woman—a woman who would shape my life and fill it with immense joy for the next 34 years. Looking back, I am grateful for the incredible journey we shared together.

Throughout our years together, she transformed me into the man I am today. Her love, support, and guidance moulded me into a better person, teaching me valuable lessons and helping me grow in countless ways. Together, we built a beautiful family, and under her nurturing care, our children have blossomed into exceptional individuals and loving parents themselves.

Her zest for life was boundless, and her compassion towards others was immeasurable. Those who were fortunate enough to be touched by her knew first-hand the magic she possessed. Today, as I celebrate our anniversary, I do so with profound pride and love, knowing that the pain I feel in her absence is a testament to the depth of love we shared.

Though she may no longer be physically present, I find solace in the knowledge that her soul rests comfortably within the depths of my heart. Her memory will forever be cherished, and I carry her with me each day until the moment when we are reunited once again.

Over the past few years, I have come to understand the true meaning of love and marriage, albeit through the painful experience of losing the woman I held dear. It is a journey that begins when you meet your partner and spend those initial years building a foundation for your relationship. However, it is only when you take the step to get married that you begin to comprehend the depth of commitment and responsibility involved.

Marriage brings with it a unique set of challenges. Financial struggles often arise, and you may find yourselves starting a family when you feel ill-prepared. Yet, despite these hardships, your love for your children is immeasurable, and you strive to provide them with everything possible to ensure their happiness. Alongside this, there may be debts to face and the arduous task of keeping a roof over your family's head. But you persevere and work your way through it, united in your determination.

Marriage, undoubtedly, has its share of ups and downs. It places tremendous strain on your relationship, testing the strength of your bond. The key to survival lies in having a partner who is wholeheartedly supportive, someone who stands by your side through thick and thin, enabling both of you to reach your shared goals.

In these recent years, I have come to realize that I had the privilege of having that perfect partner. I will forever cherish her memory and the profound impact she had on my life. Her unwavering support and dedication will be etched in my heart for eternity.

So, if you are fortunate enough to have a partner with whom you work tirelessly, hand in hand, you will emerge on the other side as a formidable team. The love you share will transcend any obstacles you encounter, remaining steadfast and enduring throughout your lives.

Expressing your emotions and sharing how you feel can indeed bring happiness, especially when it involves the most beloved person in your life. It is important to openly communicate your thoughts and feelings, including the ones that may be tinged with sadness. In my perspective, this ability to share both the joys and sorrows with your loved one is a manifestation of unconditional love.

Unconditional love goes beyond mere surface-level emotions. It encompasses acceptance, understanding, and support through all circumstances. It means being able to express your genuine emotions, knowing that your loved one will be there to listen, comfort, and stand by your side.

By openly sharing your feelings, you strengthen the bond between you and your favourite person. It creates a deeper level of connection, trust, and intimacy, fostering

a relationship built on honesty and authenticity. Through these heartfelt conversations, you can find solace, reassurance, and even solutions to challenges that arise.

Remember, true unconditional love is not limited to only expressing positive emotions. It embraces the entirety of the human experience, including moments of sadness, vulnerability, and pain. Sharing these feelings with your most cherished person demonstrates a level of trust and vulnerability that can deepen your connection and bring you closer together.

So, I wholeheartedly agree that talking about your feelings, even the ones that may be difficult, is an essential aspect of experiencing unconditional love. It allows for a profound understanding and acceptance of one another, fostering a lasting and fulfilling relationship.

Life often takes unexpected turns, and sometimes we find ourselves chasing material wealth in the belief that it will bring us happiness. However, it is in moments of hardship and adversity, when we are faced with poverty or challenges, that we are given the opportunity to grow wiser and gain a deeper understanding of life.

We may ask for specific things or circumstances that we believe will change our lives, but what we are truly given is the gift of life itself. Life is a precious and remarkable experience, filled with countless opportunities for joy, love, and fulfillment. It is not always about acquiring what we ask for, but rather appreciating and enjoying the blessings that life presents us with.

In my own journey, I have come to realize that the things I value most were not necessarily what I had asked for or hoped for. They are the moments of love, connection, and cherished memories shared with those who are dear to me. These are the true treasures that shape our lives and leave a lasting impact.

No matter the circumstances or challenges we face, we have the power to shape our own lives and find joy in every moment. It is through embracing life, loving deeply, and cherishing each day that we can truly make the most of our time here.

I want you to know that I have loved you throughout your entire life, and even though I may miss you for the rest of mine, the love we shared will continue to live on in my heart. Life is a precious gift, and it is through love and meaningful connections that we find true fulfillment and purpose.

Through my journey in life, I have discovered that the greatest treasures and joys are found in the relationships we build with the people we love, the places we explore and experience, and the precious memories we create along the way.

The love and connection we share with others bring richness and meaning to our lives. The bonds we form with family, friends, and loved ones are truly invaluable. It is in their presence, support, and shared experiences that we find comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging.

Exploring new places and immersing ourselves in different cultures expands our horizons and broadens our perspectives. The beauty of nature, the wonders of the world, and the diverse landscapes awaken a sense of awe and appreciation within us. These experiences create lasting memories that we carry with us, adding depth and colour to our life's tapestry.

But perhaps most importantly, the memories we make along our journey hold a special place in our hearts. Whether it's the laughter shared with friends, the milestones celebrated with loved ones, or the moments of personal growth and triumph, these memories become cherished treasures. They shape who we are and serve as reminders of the joys, challenges, and lessons we have encountered.

In the end, it is not the material possessions or external achievements that define a rich and fulfilling life. It is the connections we forge, the places we explore, and the memories we create that truly enrich our existence. Embrace the beauty of human connections, seek out new adventures, and cherish the moments that become the fabric of your life's story.

Over the course of eight years, I've come to realize that self-doubt is something we all experience at times. However, to progress and achieve success, it is crucial to have unwavering belief in oneself and embark on a journey of self-discovery. It is through understanding who we truly are that we can find inner peace and reignite our love for life.

When faced with challenging circumstances or the loss of a loved one, I choose not to grieve with sadness but instead approach it with a spirit of cheer. This doesn't mean disregarding or suppressing the emotions that come with grief, but rather finding ways to honour and celebrate the lives we cherish. It is in these moments of remembrance that we can find solace and embrace the joyous memories we shared.

Grief doesn't have to be solely about sorrow; it can also be an opportunity to reflect on the beauty and blessings that person brought into our lives. By focusing on the positive aspects and celebrating their presence, we can transform our grief into a celebration of their life and the impact they had on us.

In the face of doubt and grief, I have learned to embrace a mindset of resilience and optimism. Believing in oneself, understanding our identity, and choosing to grieve with cheer allows us to navigate through life's challenges and find the strength to move forward. It is through this journey of self-belief and finding inner peace that we can once again experience the fullness and love that life has to offer.

I understand that the process of healing can be challenging, especially when it comes to the pain caused by love. Love has the power to deeply touch our hearts and souls, making it one of the most significant and profound emotions we can experience. Consequently, when love is lost or goes unrequited, the healing process can be complex and lengthy.

The healing journey from a love-related hurt involves acknowledging and accepting the pain, allowing yourself to grieve and feel the emotions that come with it. It's important to give yourself the time and space needed to heal, as healing is a deeply personal and individual process.

While healing from the wounds of love may take time, it's important to remember that healing is possible. With patience, self-care, and support from loved ones, you can gradually mend the broken pieces of your heart. Surrounding yourself with positive influences, engaging in activities that bring you joy, and seeking professional help if needed can all contribute to your healing process.

Furthermore, focusing on personal growth and rediscovering your own self-worth can play a significant role in healing. Take this opportunity to learn more about yourself, your needs, and your desires. Use the experience as a catalyst for personal development and a deeper understanding of what you truly want in future relationships.

Remember, healing is a journey unique to everyone, and it may not follow a linear path. Some days may be more challenging than others, but with time, self-compassion, and the support of those around you, you can find solace and eventually open your heart to love again.

Sometimes if you're lucky someone comes into your life that will take up a place in your heart that no one else can fill someone who's tighter than a twin more with you than your own shadow who gets deeper under your skin than your own blood and bones.

Linda was the one who came to me.

In life, we encounter numerous individuals, some good and some bad, but there are also those who stand out as unique and extraordinary. At first, you may not understand why, but there's something about them that creates an indescribable aura. This person brings a smile to your face and leaves you feeling incomplete when

they're not around. For me, I found that person in 1979—an unassuming woman who eventually became my wife. As this time of year approaches, emotions and memories resurface with great intensity. Once again, I am reminded of the profound legacy Linda has left behind for all of us. She transformed me as a person through her selflessness and unwavering love, always placing the needs of others before her own. Throughout her life, she demonstrated limitless devotion to her family, protecting them as only a mother can. The greatest gift she bestowed upon me continues to evoke pain even after five years, but I'm grateful for it. It serves as a daily reminder of the depth of my love for her. Oh, how I miss her dearly.

There comes a time of year that defines who you are as a person and who has shaped you into that person. I thought I knew it all until I met the one person who was to change my life forever. Throughout her life, she strived to reach her true potential until the 1st of June 2015 when a simple headache turned into a nightmare, and I was left forever changed. Sadly, our family's rock, the matriarch who held us together, was taken from us on the 4th of July 2015.

In life, you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you; some will use you; some will love you, but the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind us why it's worth it.

In our life, we will also leave a record of ourselves and show the world who we were and what we did. None of us know how long we will live, and when that time comes, all that will be left about our brief lives is the pride the children feel when they speak our names.

I hope that one day my grandchildren will read my book because I know that a couple of them didn't have the opportunity to get to know Linda well. I hope that by reading this book, they will come to understand what a truly wonderful woman she was. One of my biggest regrets is that she never had the chance to form a bond with her young grandchildren, and they were unable to experience the love of their grandmother. However, through the act of writing this book, I am certain that they will come to appreciate the incredible person she was.

Eight years have passed since that fateful day, July 4, 2015, when Linda, my beloved, departed from this world. As I turn the pages of my journal, memories cascade like a gentle river, carrying the essence of our love through the years. It's a journey filled with pain, healing, and the enduring power of love.

In the beginning, my heart was shattered, and the pain seemed insurmountable. I felt lost, adrift in a sea of sorrow, unsure of how to navigate this new reality without her by my side. But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, I slowly

discovered the strength within me to continue living. Linda's love had instilled in me a resilience I never knew I possessed.

Through this journal, I found solace in pouring my thoughts onto these pages. The blank canvas of each entry became a mirror to my emotions, reflecting the rawest aspects of grief. Writing allowed me to hold onto her essence, preserving cherished memories that time threatened to erase.

In moments of despair, I would seek refuge in these pages. As if she were listening, I'd recount the memories of our life together. I'd write to her as though she were still here, whispering my heart's desires and pouring out my deepest sorrows. Though she was physically gone, her spirit was alive within me, and that love, oh, that love, transcended the boundaries of life and death.

As the years passed, I learned to honour her memory in the most beautiful of ways - by embracing life fully. Linda's love was the compass that guided me through the darkness, and her memory was the beacon of light that illuminated my path.

Throughout this journey, I met others who shared similar pain, and in my writing, I found a way to offer them comfort and understanding. I reached out my hand to those who needed it, just as others had done for me. Together, we formed a community of healing hearts, bound by love, loss, and the unwavering strength to carry on.

Though Linda is no longer physically present, I know that she walks with me in every step I take. Her laughter dances in the wind, her smile lingers in the sun's warm embrace, and her touch remains etched in my heart. Time may pass, but her love is eternal.

Now, as I close this journal, I do so with both a heavy heart and a heart full of gratitude. Grateful for the love we shared, thankful for the memories that continue to shape me, and appreciative of the gift that our love was and always will be.

I will miss her always, but I will carry the essence of our love forevermore. The pages of this journal may come to an end, but our story will live on, woven into the tapestry of time.

Farewell, my dear journal, and thank you for being my confidant, my sanctuary, and my reminder that love transcends all boundaries. Though I may no longer write within your pages, the love that fills them will forever be etched into my soul.

Until we meet again, Linda, know that my love for you will endure, unwavering and eternal.

Who was Linda?



There is so much I can say, but these are just insights into the extraordinary person she was.

After Linda's passing, an article appeared in the South Wales Evening Post, written by Chad Welch, published on Tuesday, July 28th, 2015.

The article paid tribute to Linda Emmanuel, a grandmother who dedicated her career, time, and home to improving the lives of disabled children. In tragic circumstances, Linda, a resident of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just 4 weeks and 5 days later. It all began when this 52-year-old visited a doctor complaining of a headache, and scans uncovered the shocking diagnosis.

Mrs. Emmanuel was a devoted carer for Carmarthenshire's short break service, a respite care service for disabled children and their families. She opened her own home to these youngsters. Her daughter, Anna Marie Sorroll, shared, "All that we were thinking of is all the children that she had been looking after. It didn't just affect us as a family; it affected all the children that she cared for. It was tough. She went up to the Heath Hospital and didn't come back."

In a personal tribute, she added, "Mom has always been a caring person and has raised us really well. She was a perfect example in all the work she did. The people she worked with all said there was only one Linda, and she's going to be really hard to replace."

Mrs. Emmanuel's 5-year-old grandson, Harrison Haines, has autism. Because of her work with autistic children, the family has been avid supporters of "Week on the Street," a local charity for autistic children. In honour of her memory, the family decided to donate any money received at the funeral to "Week on the Street."

Harrison and his mom shared a strong bond, and they understood each other profoundly. Week on the Street founder, Tom Nesmyth Shaw, noted, "She did a lot for autism. We didn't know each other well, but we spoke now and again, and it was an absolute pleasure." Mrs. Sorrell added, "We thought it was only right to donate to Tom's charity because we knew that he works closely with people that Mom worked with. She would have wanted that, and she was a supporter of it."

When Linda was first admitted to Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen, she shared a room with three other patients. One of those patients was elderly and had difficulty with her speech. When the food trolley arrived, the gentleman couldn't understand what the lady wanted to eat, even though she tried to communicate her preference. Linda, who was observing the situation, stepped in and conveyed the lady's request to the gentleman. He was surprised and asked how she understood the lady. Linda explained that her work with children with special needs had made her adept at deciphering speech impediments and understanding what people needed.

During our time living in Burry Port in my father's house, where we were closer to him as he was in a nursing home, Linda continued to care for the disabled children under her wing. Many of our neighbours were elderly women who took great joy in Linda's visits with the children and relished their presence.

These women were deeply saddened when they learned that Linda was hospitalized and diagnosed with a brain tumour. When I visited Linda in the hospital, she conveyed her concern about their welfare and asked me to share this note with each one of them.

Hello, my lovely ladies x I hear you have all been asking about me and I don't want you to worry x I remember when Gwyneth was ill how much it upset you. Just be reassured that I am in safe expert hands and fussing over lovely ladies just like yourselves actually they are watching out for me too x if ever you have to stay in Steffan ward the staff are very caring, compassionate, gentle, and we brighten up their day when they come to work. Try not to worry about graham because he has lots of support from family and friends x my lovely little children are all being cared for by their lovely families, so I am rested myself xi hope this brings you comfort. xx God Bless my dear friends ❤️❤️

Kindest regards

Linda Emmanuel

In 2013, Linda worked at a Fire Protection company in Swansea, where she served as the office manager. During her tenure, she conducted an interview for a position within the office. While interviewing a young man, she noticed his lack of confidence in his communication. However, despite this initial impression, she chose to provide him with an opportunity to demonstrate his capabilities.

In August 2013, Linda decided to leave the company to focus on her work with Barnardo's, where she provided respite care to disabled children.

The young man she had interviewed was Jared Fry, a 30-year-old office worker. He wished to express his gratitude to Linda for the impact she had on his life. He sent her a text message with the following content:

"Hi Linda, I never had the chance to say a proper goodbye, but I wanted to let you know how profoundly grateful I am for everything you've done for me. It means more to me than you can imagine.

I realize that we might have had our disagreements at times, but when I initially accepted the job, I didn't believe in my abilities. I simply pretended to be confident,

as I had very little self-assurance. However, for some reason, you had faith in my potential.

The truth is, if the Fire Safety company were to, close tomorrow, I could confidently seek employment in an office setting. This newfound confidence is thanks to you, and it holds great significance for the rest of my life.

Once again, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude. You are a special person in my life, Linda, and you have made a significant difference. Thank you."

One in a Million

During her tenure at Carmarthenshire Short Break Service, she consistently made herself available to assist with recruitment and authored a blog to illustrate the nature of her work.

Looking back on the 8 years as a Short Break Carer today, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with, is the praise I received from my husband Graham (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of children that I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on. Its lovely to hear that people appreciate/admire the work that I do, some call me a special person, some have mentioned therapeutic carer but for me, it's embarrassing!! Writing it down is even harder!

I always remind my work colleagues that I will always say yes to anything because that is my nature, so that's why I am writing this blog. Must learn to say no!!

The first paragraph was the hardest to write but I wanted to show the respect that I have gained being a Short Break Carer. I suppose that if I didn't have these comments then I would probably think that I wasn't doing a good enough job! So, in that respect I thank and appreciate every one of them.

Being a Mum of 4 children and a grandmother of 7 children I suppose I have had plenty of practice of looking after children but not with children additional needs, until recently. My grandson, Harrison has been diagnosed with Autism within the last year.

My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. My husband noticed an advert in the Llanelli Star advertising for volunteers to provide respite to help support families locally, with Barnardo's. I fancied helping out, so Kay and I became carers. We are attending training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006. In time, Kay moved back to Newport, South Wales and I carried on as a single carer. In April last year Carmarthen Council took us in-house and I now work for the Short Break Service.

A little bit about the children I support.... They broke me in gently, so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started caring for children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome. I now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include, Multi-Sensory Impairments, OCD and special awareness issues, Dietary needs, Acid Reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my Team (Short Break Service), Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend Annual Reviews at Schools, Meetings with GP's, Children in Need Meetings, and any meetings that I can, that will enable me to help support the child.

A typical visit could be a child arrives on school bus to me. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and then work from there. Parents arrived with other sibling which gives me a chance to check on any issues such as, change of medication, update on what the child has eaten etc.

Once the parents have left and the children are comfortable and relaxed then the fun begins....if it's a nice day we may put a blanket out on the grass, collect some toys that the child may enjoy interacting with and at the same time seeing to the needs of their sibling, which may be very different from the other child, such as wanting a bounce on the trampoline, fun in the sand pit or just chilling watching Peppa Pig.

After tea, then bath time for the children and their favourite story time before bed. Once one child is settled to sleep then medication for the other child and supper then their bedtime. Tidy up time for me, including washing clothes for children before settling down to start my recordings before my early night!

Up early next day, before children, to get ready myself then waking children to give them breakfast, wash and brush their teeth and getting dressed ready for school. After they leave then its tidy up time and maybe changeover of bedding for different child arriving at 3.15pm.

Memorable times.....numerous amount of times, over and over again... Standing at a gate watching some animals grazing in a field, standing on a bridge waiting for a train to go underneath, watching a child running towards me for a cwtsh, a child repeating a repetitive tune back to me, watching the response from a child who doesn't communicate in the usual ways but by poking out their tongue as a response to your efforts, watching a child learn to work a block puzzle and requesting praise in their own little way by clapping their hands, watching a very unstable child learning to walk with shoulders, arms and hands in control, taking a memorable photo of a child or recording a memorable video to see progress a child is making....I could go on...I have learnt so much from these children and from my role as a Short Break Carer.

Yes, Linda you were a very Special Person and a true Professional.

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TRAGIC MUM DEVOTED LIFE TO HELPING KIDS



Chad Welch

TRIBUTES have been paid to a grandmother who devoted her life to improving the lives of disabled children.

Linda Emmanouel, of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just four weeks later.

Full story: page 11

Victim offered to call burglar an ambulance

PAGE 22

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Linda's Story

Looking back on 8 years as a Short Break Carer, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with is the praise I receive from my husband (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of the children I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on.

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They broke me in gently so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started looking after children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome. I

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A typical visit

A child arrives on the school bus. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and

then work from there. Once the child is comfortable then the fun can begin. If it's a nice day we may take a blanket and some toys out to the garden, bounce on the trampoline, play in the sand pit or just chill out watching Peppa Pig. After tea and bath time it's time for their favourite story before bed.

Tidy up time for me, including washing the child's clothes before settling down to start my recording before my early night! Up early the next day to get myself ready then wake the child for breakfast, wash and brush teeth and get dressed for school. After they leave it's tidy up time and maybe a changeover of bedding for a different child arriving at 3.15pm.

There have been so many memorable times from standing at a gate watching animals graze to watching a child run over for a cwtsh. I could go on and on... I have learnt so much from these children and my role as a Short Break Carer.



In memory of Linda Emmanuel, Short Break Carer

Could you care for a child with a learning or physical disability? Do you like a challenge?

If you have time, energy, patience and a sense of fun; if you can relate to, respect, communicate and listen to children, please contact Carmarthenshire County Council to hear more about Fostering and Short Breaks. Tel 0800 0933699 or visit www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/fostering




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Ydych chi'n mwynhau her?
Os ydych chi'n meddwl y gallwch chi wneud gwahaniaeth i bywyd plentyn - cysylltwch â Chyngor Sir Caerfyrddin.
Rydym yn chwilio am ofalwyr seibiant byr a gofalwyr maeth i weithio gyda phlant a phobl ifanc ag anableddau dysgu a chorfforol.

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These stories are just a few I could go on, but my greatest joy was to receive an award for her work with the Carmarthenshire Council Care Services a beautiful Pottery Jug with the inscription “One in a Million” and “Linda Loved and Remembered Always”.





In a heartfelt tribute, Linda consistently embodied compassion in everything she did. Those who had the privilege of working alongside her unanimously declared, "There was only one Linda, and she's going to be incredibly challenging to replace."

To me, Linda was not only my soulmate but also an extraordinary mother and grandmother. Her nurturing spirit extended beyond our family, making her a living angel to many. The warmth of her kindness and the depth of her care left an indelible mark on everyone fortunate enough to have crossed paths with her. Linda's legacy is a testament to the immeasurable impact one caring soul can have on the lives of others.

Linda Jane Elizabeth Emmanuel 26/4/1963 – 4/7/2015

Magic of the “Wild Atlantic Way”

Travel and grief, I’ve found, are two sides of the same coin. Both take you on a journey grief leading you through the winding roads of the mind, while travel carries you along the open paths of the soul. My journey began on July 4th, 2015, when grief entered my life and changed it forever. It was the day I lost Linda, my beloved wife, to a brain tumour. But it was also the day she set me on a different path—a path of exploration, healing, and rediscovery.

Just before she passed, Linda urged me to travel, telling me I could love again but needed to find that love on the road. It took three long years for my heart and mind to catch up with her words—three years before the paths of grief and travel would converge, finally leading me to a place of inner peace. That place was Ireland, along the rugged and breathtakingly beautiful Wild Atlantic Way.

In 2018 and 2019, I found myself drawn to its winding roads and untamed coastlines, and I wasn’t alone. My loyal companion, Lizzy the Jug, was by my side, a constant reminder of life’s simple joys. Together, we ventured into the unknown, unravelling the threads of the past while weaving new memories. The miles we travelled along the west coast were more than just scenic routes—they were a journey back to myself, helping me honour Linda’s memory and embrace life again, step by step, year by year.

Lizzy and I set off on our latest adventure on April 17th, leaving Carmarthenshire behind and embarking on a journey that would take us across Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland before arriving in the Republic of Ireland. As we followed the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), we covered 2,950 miles and experienced the breath-taking beauty each county has to offer. We met incredible people who didn’t just remain acquaintances—they became friends.



I couldn't tell you how much farther we'll go, and honestly, I don't care. Time has lost its rigid structure; it is now measured by moments worth cherishing. Every day on this journey is a gift, and Lizzy and I are determined to savour each one. Linda would be so proud of what we've achieved, as life has taught me in the hardest way that it is far too short. So, we live for today, and embrace each moment as if it could be our last.

Right now, we'll head south, welcoming the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Sitting here, reflecting on another wonderful day spent exploring this beautiful country, I realize how much I'm enjoying the journey and the experiences that come with it.

One thing that has stood out is the pride people take in their surroundings. The homes are well-kept, charming, and full of character. The roads whether narrow lanes or coastal routes—are immaculate, with no litter in sight. It's clear that the people here cherish their country, and that pride shines through in every neat garden and tidy street. It's inspiring, and it has given me a newfound appreciation for the quiet, simple beauty that surrounds us every day.

The Wild Atlantic Way has become more than just a travel route for me—it has been a sanctuary, a place where grief and healing intertwine. In 2018, the pain was still raw, a weight that seemed impossible to lift. But as I traced the coastline, the stunning landscapes—where rugged cliffs meet the vast, restless ocean—offered a silent companionship. The windswept shores and mist-covered hills gave me the space to grieve, remember Linda, and honour the love we shared. I found comfort in the rhythmic crash of the waves and the endless horizon, reminding me that even in the darkest times, there is always a path forward, however uncertain it may be.

Returning in 2019 felt like coming back to a dear friend. This time, the beauty of the Wild Atlantic Way welcomed me with a different kind of embrace. It wasn't just about mourning anymore; it was about reconnecting with life, finding peace in the quiet resilience of the Irish landscape, and letting the vibrant greens, endless skies, and ancient rocks tell a story of endurance. The people of Ireland, with their kindness and unhurried ways, played a crucial role in my healing. Whether it was a friendly chat in a cosy pub, the sound of traditional music lifting my spirits, or a shared moment overlooking the sea, each encounter reminded me of humanity's shared struggles and joys.

These two journeys along the Wild Atlantic Way have not been a cure for grief, but they have become an essential part of my journey toward healing. They have taught me to carry Linda's memory with love, not just pain. As Lizzy and I continue our adventure, I know that the road ahead is still full of unknowns, but I also know that each day brings the promise of something beautiful. This journal will capture our story—of the places that called to us, the people who touched our hearts, and the magic that exists along the edges of the Wild Atlantic Way.

This is where grief and travel met, and where, mile by mile, I began to find my way back to myself.

The Most Unexpected Moments Along the WAW

People often ask me which part of the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) inspired me the most. It's difficult to choose just one, as each turn of the road brought something special, but there is one moment that stands out above all others.

On June 3rd, 2018, I decided to follow a sign for Healy Pass, starting from Adrigole and heading north. The narrow, winding road snaked its way upward through a rugged, rocky valley—an untamed landscape that seemed like a geologist's dream. The barren beauty of the place had a raw and almost otherworldly feel, and it seemed to whisper stories of ancient times.

As I reached the top, I couldn't stop—the car park was already full. So, I continued toward the summit, winding higher along the narrow path. Then, it happened. I crested the mountain, and what lay before me took my breath away. It felt like a scene straight out of a movie—a moment when the world opens to reveal a hidden paradise, a Shangri-La. There, unfolding before me, was the most stunning view I'd ever seen.

The landscape stretched out in a breath-taking panorama that pictures could never truly capture. The mountains rolled gently down to meet a lush valley, while the light danced on the lakes and streams below. It was magical—a view that left me speechless and stirred something deep inside me.



This was the pivotal moment of my journey. Don't get me wrong, the entire trip had been incredible, full of awe-inspiring scenery and unforgettable experiences. But there was

something about coming over that mountain and seeing this view that made it all feel truly extraordinary. It was as if, in that moment, I had found what I didn't even know I was searching for.

Healy Pass in Cork became a turning point, a place where the journey took on new meaning and left a mark on my soul that I would carry with me for the rest of my life.

Unplanned Moments and Unexpected Discoveries Along the Wild Atlantic Way

When people ask what inspires me to return to Ireland each year and travel the Wild Atlantic Way, my answer is always the same: it's the not knowing. It's the thrill of discovering new places and uncovering the stories that lie hidden in the landscapes. Each journey feels like an invitation to wander, explore, and find meaning in unexpected moments.

A day that sums up this sense of discovery happened on July 31st. Even though I've travelled to many of these places before, this time, I experienced them in a new light. What hasn't changed is the generosity, kindness, and warmth of the people I meet along the way—qualities that continue to make Ireland feel like a second home.

That day, I set off to Falcarragh on the recommendation of a local, who suggested I stop by the Gweedore Bar for a meal. But I arrived earlier than planned, so I had some time to spare. Just outside of town, I spotted the ruins of an old church, and curiosity got the better of me. I drove down a narrow, overgrown lane to get a closer look. At the end of the road, I realised I'd have to reverse back out, as it was too tight to turn around. But it was worth it.

The church, as I later found out, was Ray Church. Inside, a large stone cross pierced the sky, rising from the open roof, capturing my attention. I was intrigued why was such a large cross placed here? I did some research and was astounded by the history that unfolded.



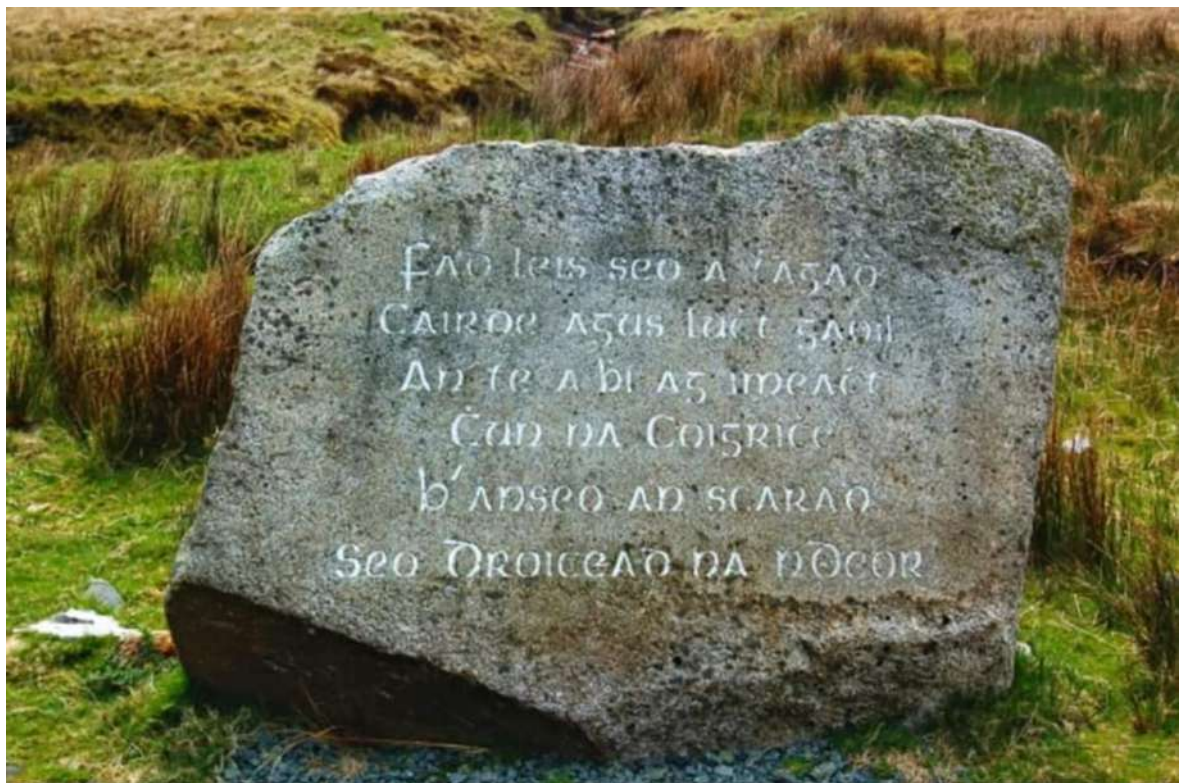
In the 17th century, the church had been the site of a massacre by Oliver Cromwell's men, who stormed in during a Sunday Mass, killing men, women, and children. The victims were laid to rest in a mass grave known as "The Resting Place of The Bones." The cross itself, carved from a single piece of stone, had originally been destined for Tory Island but was later gifted to the church. It was knocked down in a storm in 1750, repaired by the Office of Public Works in the 1970s, and placed inside the church to preserve its history.



Later that same day, as I drove back along the N256 from Falcarragh toward Glenveagh National Park, I had to pull over to let a car pass on the narrow road. That's when I noticed a boulder nearby with Gaelic writing carved into it. Curious once again, I discovered I had stumbled upon another poignant piece of history: the Bridge of Tears.



This bridge was once part of the main route to Derry, a road that many Irish people took when emigrating to America or other destinations during difficult times. It was here, at this very spot, that families would bid their final farewells, knowing they might never see one another again. The bridge earned its name from the countless tears shed there over the years—a place of both sorrow and resilience.



All of this happened in just one day, yet my journey along the Wild Atlantic Way lasted six weeks. It's difficult to capture the entirety of what I saw, felt, and experienced. Each day brought new wonders, and every path led to stories that touched my heart.

The trip was, once again, an emotional journey—one inspired by my beloved wife, Linda. She knew what she was doing when she told me to travel before, she passed away. It has given me a purpose, an opportunity to explore incredible places, meet amazing people, and, most importantly, rediscover myself.

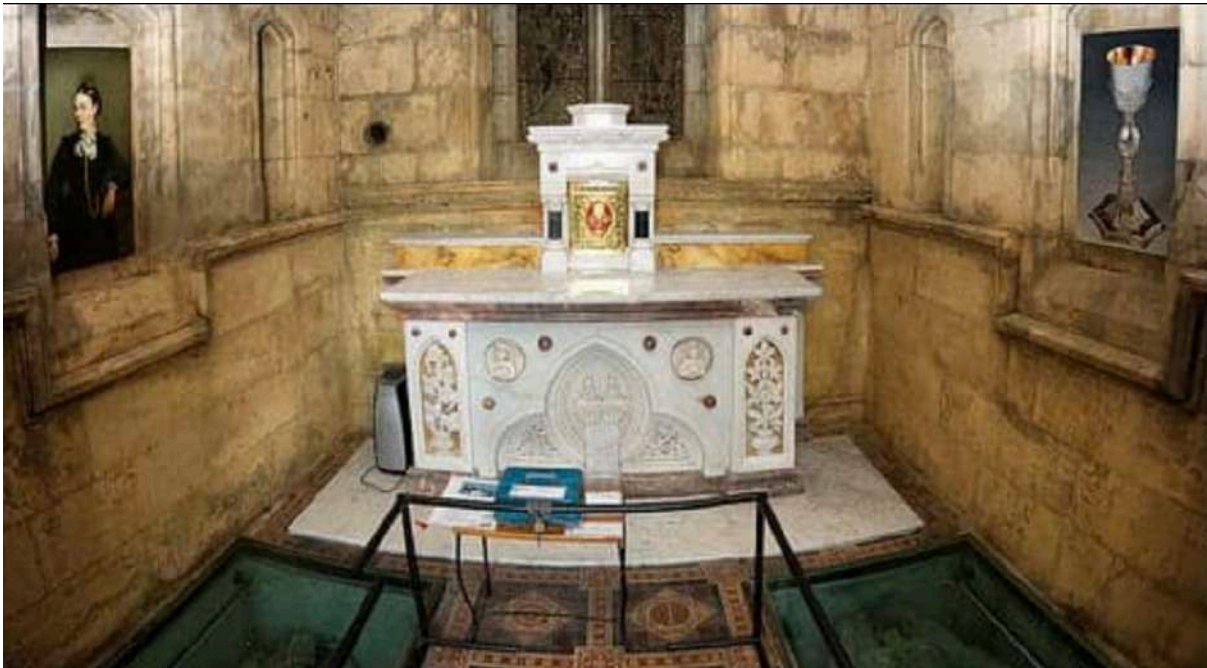
The Wild Atlantic Way is more than just a road; it's a path of healing, a canvas for memories, and a place where the unexpected can change everything.

A Story of Love in Carrick-on-Shannon

Every year, I find myself drawn to places that seem to whisper, "You need to be here." It's as if certain places along my journey call out to me, resonating with something deep within. In Carrick-on-Shannon, I stumbled upon such a place—a small, unassuming chapel that, at first glance, didn't seem particularly special. But when I learned its story, it touched my soul in a way few places have. It was the story of a man's enduring love for his wife and the lengths he went to honour her memory.



The chapel was built by Edward Costello in memory of his beloved wife, Mary Josephine. After her passing, he began work on the memorial, intending it to be both a monument to his love and a final resting place for them both. It was completed and dedicated on April 22, 1879. On that day, after the consecration ceremony, Mary's body was laid to rest in a sunken space to the left of the entrance, encased in a metal coffin. A specially made thick glass slab was placed over her, allowing the inscriptions on the coffin to be read even now, with the aid of a torch.



Mary's body had been carefully embalmed and cared for by the Marist nuns after her death, a testament to the devotion and love Edward felt for her. He wanted her memory preserved, even in death, so that she would always be near. When Edward himself passed away in March 1891, his remains were placed in a similar fashion to the right of the entrance, also under a thick glass cover.



For years, mass was held in the chapel on the first Friday of every month, a ritual that continued until Edward's own death. Since then, the chapel has fallen silent, nestled between two modern buildings, just a few yards from Carrick's town clock—a hidden relic of a love story that has quietly endured through the years.

Standing there, I felt a profound connection to Edward's devotion. It reminded me of my own love for Linda and the ways I've tried to honour her memory. My annual journeys to Ireland are, in a way, my tribute to her a promise to keep her spirit alive through the places I visit and the stories I uncover. As I stood outside that little chapel, I was reminded that true love

transcends time and space, living on in the quiet corners of the world where memories linger and hearts remain steadfast.



This chapel may not be grand, but its story is. It's a testament to the enduring power of love and the beauty of remembrance—a lesson that no matter how much time passes, love continues to echo across the years, touching the hearts of those who are willing to listen.

Taking my Breath Away

One trip that truly took my breath away was to Valentia Island in County Kerry. What started as a quick stop to see the lighthouse turned into something much more. I found myself driving further up the mountain, drawn by the promise of a better view. Reaching the higher ground, I looked down on Valentia Island Lighthouse from above, and the scene that unfolded was nothing short of incredible.



From that vantage point, the lighthouse stood proudly against the backdrop of the bay, with Beginish Island resting quietly in the distance. The whole landscape felt alive, with the sea stretching out and the rugged coastline wrapping around it all. It wasn't just a view; it was one of those rare moments when nature seems to come together in perfect harmony, reminding me of the beauty still to be found, even on the hardest days.

And then, finally seeing Fanad Head Lighthouse up close was another experience altogether. Standing right next to it, feeling the sea breeze, and hearing the waves crashing against the rocks, was like connecting with something timeless. The lighthouse, with its stark white walls against the deep blues of the ocean, felt like a beacon not just for sailors, but for me, too. It was a place that spoke of resilience and guidance, and in that moment, I felt a sense of grounding, as if I'd found a small piece of what I was searching for on this journey.

Fanad Head Lighthouse, located on the northern coast of County Donegal, has a rich history dating back to its construction in 1817. The lighthouse was built in response to a tragic shipwreck, the sinking of the HMS Saldanha in 1811, which claimed all 253 lives onboard. This disaster highlighted the need for a guiding light to safely navigate the rugged coastline.

Standing at 39 meters tall, the lighthouse has been a vital beacon for sailors for over two centuries, guiding ships through the treacherous waters of the North Atlantic and the entrance to Lough Swilly. Throughout its history, it has undergone various upgrades, including electrification in the 1970s and automation in 1983. Despite these changes, the structure has retained its iconic appearance, with its white tower standing proudly against the dramatic backdrop of Donegal's coastline.



Today, Fanad Head Lighthouse is not only a historic maritime landmark but also a symbol of resilience. It serves as a reminder of the lives lost at sea and the enduring efforts to protect those who navigate these waters, while offering visitors a glimpse into Ireland's maritime heritage and breath-taking views of the surrounding landscape.

A Magical Night at Ballycroy National Park



A few years ago, I had the pleasure of a truly unforgettable stopover at Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre. That night was filled with a mix of culture, magic, and the wonders of the night sky—an experience that left a lasting impression.

The evening kicked off at 9:30 p.m. with a session led by Dan O'Donovan, who enchanted us with his traditional Irish storytelling, verse, and song. His captivating words breathed life into the folklore, making it easy to get lost in the tales. As if that wasn't enough, Dan amazed us with his sleight-of-hand magic tricks, leaving everyone in awe—I still can't figure out how he pulled them off!

Later, we headed outside, with Lizzy in tow, to explore the night skies under the guidance of astronomers Ged and Georgina from Terra Firma Ireland. It was my first time having the night sky explained to me, and it made all the difference. I even saw the planet Venus for the first time, initially mistaking it for a star because of its brightness. I learned that unlike stars, planets don't twinkle—an insight that has stayed with me ever since.



The entire evening was a revelation, and I'd highly recommend their events to anyone. It was an experience that opened my eyes to the beauty of the world in a new way, and I look forward to returning someday.

I also want to mention Patrick, who was so helpful during my visit—it meant a lot at a time when I needed it.

While walking around the grounds, I noticed a plaque dedicated to Conservation Ranger Brian Harran, with an inscription that struck a chord:



*"In the end, we will conserve only what we love,
We will love only what we understand,
And we will understand only what we are taught."*

Those words resonated deeply and carry even more significance in today's world.

Cong Co Mayo

Cong, a charming village nestled on the border of Counties Mayo and Galway in Ireland, is steeped in history and natural beauty. It sits on a narrow isthmus between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, making it a picturesque location surrounded by lakes and lush landscapes. The village is perhaps best known for its connection to "The Quiet Man," the classic 1952 film starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara. Many scenes from the movie were shot in Cong, and the village still celebrates this heritage, with a museum dedicated to the film and various landmarks that recall iconic scenes.

One of the village's most notable features is the ruins of Cong Abbey, a medieval Augustinian abbey founded in the 12th century by Turlough O'Connor, the High King of Ireland. The abbey, with its intricate stone carvings and remnants of cloistered walkways, provides a glimpse into Cong's religious past. It was once a thriving centre of learning and worship, and its serene setting along the river adds to its sense of ancient tranquillity.



Adjacent to the abbey is the unique Fisherman's House, a small stone structure that the monks ingeniously used for catching fish. The building is situated over a narrow stream, with specially designed traps built into the floor that allowed fish to be caught without the need for nets. This clever method not only provided the monks with sustenance but also reflected their deep connection to the natural resources around them.



The river flowing through Cong is slow-moving and crystal clear, adding to the village's idyllic atmosphere. Stone bridges cross the gentle waters, and lush greenery lines the banks, creating a peaceful setting for leisurely walks. The area offers plenty of outdoor activities, from fishing and boating on the nearby lakes to exploring scenic trails that wind through woodlands and pastures.



Cong is a place where history, culture, and natural beauty blend seamlessly, providing visitors with a sense of stepping back in time while enjoying the charm and hospitality of a classic Irish village.

Solitude & Beauty

When people ask me what makes the Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland so special, I tell them it's the one place where I can truly lose myself and reconnect with what life is all about.

The sense of solitude and breath-taking beauty make every moment feel almost euphoric, while the warmth and kindness of the people I meet along the way add a richness that's hard to find elsewhere.

Driving along the beautifully roads, I'm surrounded by the expansive marshland, where the landscape stretches endlessly before me.



The vastness creates a sense of freedom, and I feel the open air wrapping around me as I travel. One minute, I'm immersed in the tranquility of the winding road, and then, as I round a corner, I'm suddenly confronted by a stunning beach stretching out before me. Barley Cove Beach in Cannawee, County Cork, unfolds like a hidden gem, with its golden sands and gentle waves lapping at the shore.



This contrast is remarkable: from the peaceful marshland to the lively energy of the beach, where the horizon meets the sea in a dance of colour and light. It's moments like these that take my breath away, reminding me why I'm on this journey. Each unexpected view, each encounter, and each quiet moment spent in nature shapes my experience and deepens my appreciation for this incredible place.

Glengesh Pass

Glengesh Pass is one of the most breath-taking and dramatic mountains passes in Ireland, located in County Donegal. This stunning route winds its way through the rugged landscape of the Bluestack Mountains, offering travellers a picturesque journey filled with awe-inspiring views.



Kells Bay House & Gardens

During my visit to Kells Bay House and Garden in June 2018, I was immediately captivated by the serene beauty and charm of the estate. Nestled in a lush, green landscape along the Wild Atlantic Way, Kells Bay is a hidden gem that offers a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.



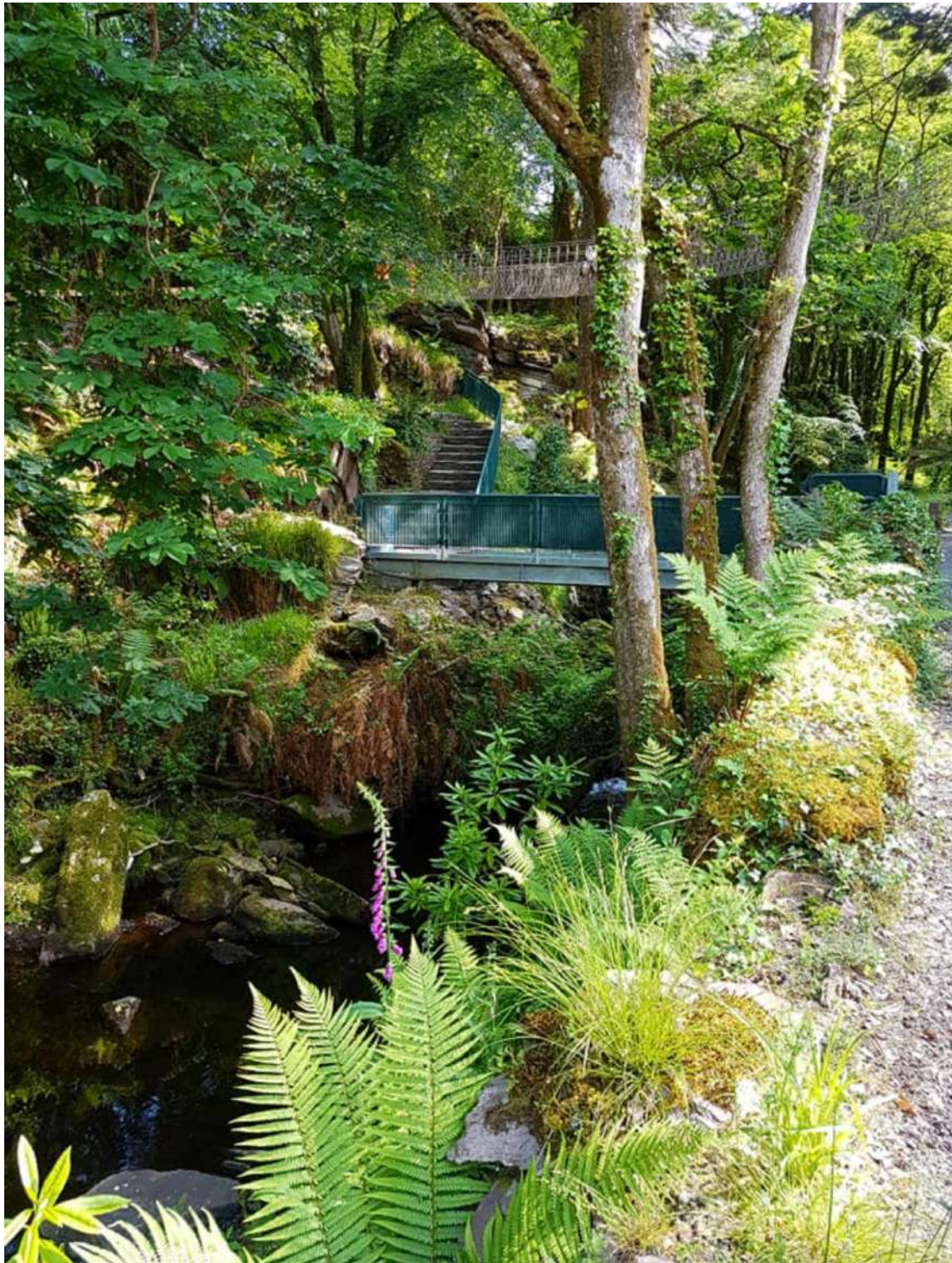
As I arrived at Kells Bay House, the stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the shimmering waters of the bay greeted me. The house itself is a beautifully restored Victorian residence, exuding a sense of history and warmth. Walking through its doors, I felt as though I had stepped back in time, surrounded by elegant decor and the faint scent of blooming flowers from the gardens outside.

The gardens were nothing short of spectacular. I wandered through the carefully curated pathways lined with vibrant flowers, exotic plants, and towering trees, each area inviting exploration. One of the highlights was the impressive collection of subtropical plants, which thrive in the mild climate of the area. The colours were vibrant, and the air was filled with the sweet fragrance of blossoms, making it a truly immersive experience.

One of the most memorable moments was when I stumbled upon the iconic Kells Bay palm trees, which stood tall against the backdrop of the mountains. I couldn't resist taking a few photographs, trying to capture the unique juxtaposition of palm trees in Ireland—an image that perfectly encapsulates the unexpected beauty of the place.

As I made my way through the gardens, I took a moment to sit by the water's edge. The tranquil atmosphere allowed me to reflect on my journey, surrounded by nature's beauty. It was a time of peace and contemplation, reminding me of the healing power of nature and the importance of taking a step back to appreciate the world around me.

My visit to Kells Bay House and Garden was not just about the stunning scenery; it was also a moment of personal reflection. The tranquillity of the gardens and the breath-taking views provided a perfect backdrop for my thoughts, allowing me to reconnect with myself amidst the natural beauty that surrounded me.



As I left Kells Bay, I felt a sense of rejuvenation. The experience was a reminder of the simple joys in life and the beauty that can be found in unexpected places. Kells Bay will always hold a special place in my heart, representing a moment of peace and connection during my travels along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Belleek Castle Hotel

As I entered Belleek Castle, I was initially excited by its stunning architecture, expecting to find a charming hotel. The grand stone facade and ornate details gave off an air of elegance that hinted at a luxurious stay. However, as I stepped inside, I quickly realised that this place was more than just a hotel.



The spacious foyer welcomed me with a rich history, filled with fascinating artifacts and beautifully crafted furnishings. Instead of the typical hotel lobby, I found myself in a museum, showcasing the castle's past and its connection to the surrounding area. Each room was adorned with exhibits that told the story of the castle and its significance, offering insights into local heritage that I hadn't anticipated.



I finally got the time to share pictures of my recent visit to Belleek Castle, Ireland. What a gem! This place is an hotel but also boasts an impressive armour collection. I had the honour of being shown around by Derek Davidson and Stephan, the Curator at Belleek, which I truly appreciated.



Exploring the castle felt like stepping back in time, as I wandered through halls lined with memorabilia and historical displays. The unexpected blend of hospitality and history made my visit feel special, as I absorbed the stories hidden within the walls.



Belleek Castle may not have been the hotel I thought it was, but it certainly left a lasting impression. The combination of its enchanting atmosphere and the fascinating glimpse into the past transformed my visit into an enriching experience, making it a memorable stop on my journey.

Tubrid Holy Well in County Cork

I had the opportunity to visit Tubrid Holy Well in County Cork, and it was truly a remarkable experience. As I approached the well, I was enveloped by a sense of calm and spirituality that I hadn't anticipated. The lush greenery surrounding the area created a peaceful atmosphere, with the gentle sounds of nature echoing all around me.



Upon reaching the well, I was captivated by the sight of water bubbling up from the ground, cascading over a small stone wall. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before; the water flowed freely, inviting me closer. The bubbling source, so pure and vibrant, drew me in, and I felt compelled to experience it first-hand.



I dipped my fingers into the cool, clear water and then took a moment to absorb the serenity of the place. Drinking from the well felt like participating in a long-standing tradition, a connection to the countless souls who have visited this sacred spot before me.

As part of my visit, I lit some candles at the well in memory of my beloved Linda, my dad Vernon, my mum Estelle, and Linda's mother Anne. Their presence was felt in that sacred space, and I took comfort in knowing they will always be remembered.



This visit was not just about the well itself but about finding peace and solace in a world that often feels chaotic. Tubrid Holy Well reminded me of the healing power of nature and the importance of pausing to appreciate the beauty around us.



If you ever find yourself in County Cork, I highly recommend taking the time to visit this beautiful spot. It's a hidden gem that offers more than just water; it offers a moment of stillness and a chance to reconnect with yourself and those you hold dear.

Reflecting on My Time on the Wild Atlantic Way

As I look back on my journeys along the Wild Atlantic Way, I find myself reflecting on the beauty and diversity of this stunning landscape. Each photograph I've shared over time has elicited different reactions from those who view them, highlighting the unique perspectives that each person brings.

What truly captivates me about the Wild Atlantic Way is how each region possesses its own charm. From the lush, green valleys and shimmering loughs to the stark, rugged landscapes of Connemara, every part of this route tells its own story. Each time I visit, I am reminded that nature is ever-changing; I notice details and nuances that I may have overlooked on previous trips. This sense of discovery is one of the main reasons I return.

During my last two trips, I've also encountered many people who, like me, have been inspired to embrace life and seek happiness anew. Hearing their stories of transformation fills me with hope and joy. It reminds me that the Wild Atlantic Way is not just a scenic route; it's a journey of healing and discovery for so many.

Life is for living, and time is a precious commodity that should never be wasted. The moments spent along the Wild Atlantic Way have taught me to cherish every experience, every encounter, and every breath-taking view. I look forward to what lies ahead and am grateful for the memories I have created along this remarkable journey.

Graham T Emmanuel & Lizzy the Jug 2018-2019

The Stones Talk

In exploration our ancestral roots through visiting the resting places of my ancestors and documenting has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage in how the words they leave tell us their stories too. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. I find some of their stories need to be told so some of the ones I think are worth in restoring them.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance, humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave.

It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

In Llandyry Church from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19th November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR PARENTS
EDWARD FRATER
DIED 29TH DEC 1957
AGED 68.
AND ELIZABETH FRATER
DIED 10TH MAY 1963
AGED 68
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

With each day more family history is discovered before I came onto the grave of George & Annie Cunnington with an inscription that mention their son Wilfred Courtney Cunnington with the mention on the headstone of his fate in the WW2.

As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

"In Loving Memory of OUR DEAR SON PILOT SERG WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON 148 B SQUADRON RAF (OF TRIMSARAN) LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS PEACE PERFECT PEACE"
ALSO GEORGE S CUNNINGTON, HIS DEAR FATHER DIED OCT 30, 1953, AGED 77 YEARS
ALSO ANNIE CUNNINGTON DIED NOV 10, 1969, AGED 90 YEARS AT REST



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

With each passing day, the journey through history brings new chapters to light, unveiling stories that have weathered the sands of time. Among the markers of remembrance, the memorial headstone of Nathaniel and Eliza Hancock (Plot PN-K8) stood as a silent testament to a family's enduring love and sacrifice, with an inscription that echoed through the years:



"PEACE IN LOVING MEMORY OF NATHANIEL HANCOCK DIED JAN. 8, 1937 AGED 59 YEARS. EVER IN OUR THOUGHTS, ALSO HIS DEAR WIFE ELIZA HANCOCK DIED SEPT. 23, 1955 AGED 76 ALSO OF THEIR SON RICHARD GEORGE HANCOCK B.S.M.-R.A. DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE 1939-1945 EVER REMEMBERED"

This inscription held a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by this family during a time of global turmoil. The mention of their son, Richard George Hancock, who died on active service, ignited a spark of curiosity, driving me to uncover more about his story.

And so, the journey of discovery led me to the remarkable story of Warrant Officer Class II (Battery Serjeant-Major) Richard George Hancock. His service, marked by dedication and courage, unfolded against the backdrop of World War II. Tragically, his life was cut short on the 14th of November 1942, in the sands of Egypt, amidst the fierce battles of El Alamein.

The scroll that commemorates his sacrifice reads:

"This scroll commemorates Battery Serjeant-Major R. G. Hancock Royal Regiment of Artillery held in honour as one who served King and Country in the world war of 1939-1945 and gave his life to save mankind from tyranny. May his sacrifice help to bring the peace and freedom for which he died."

Richard George Hancock's role in the struggle against tyranny is a testament to his bravery and selflessness. He stands as a symbol of all those who served, whose sacrifices paved the path to a better future. The battles he fought were

not just on distant lands; they were the embodiment of a collective effort to preserve freedom and humanity.

As I reflect on his story, I am reminded of the interconnectedness of history and how the lives of individuals intertwine with the greater narrative. The inscription on the headstone and the scroll of commemoration stands as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that Richard George Hancock's memory endures, and his sacrifice continues to inspire. May his legacy be a beacon of hope, reminding us of the price paid for the peace and freedom we hold dear.

I chanced upon an inconspicuous headstone, Plot (PF-C6) which soon revealed itself to be a poignant memorial that held a deeper narrative.



IN MEMORY OF
PRYCE LLOYD
DIED NOV 26: 1917
AGED 70 YEARS
ALSO GRIFFITH HIS SON THIS SON

KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
MARCH 28, 1918, AGED 28 YEARS

This solemn inscription piqued my curiosity, prompting me to delve further into the story of Pryce Lloyd's cherished son, Griffith. It became evident that Griffith was not laid to rest here, and my curiosity drove me to uncover more details. As I delved deeper, this is what I uncovered.

This is for the memory of Griffith Lloyd, Private, 307171, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Griffith Lloyd, the cherished son of Pryce and Ellen Lloyd. A life intertwined with the land, both Griffith and his father served as Gamekeepers at Trimsaran, residing at the Keeper's Lodge before the world was plunged into conflict.

Answering the call of duty, Griffith enlisted in Kidwelly, joining the ranks of the 2/8th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers. This valiant unit was affiliated with the 197 Brigade, a crucial part of the 66th (2nd East Lancs.) Division. Their journey led them to the Western Front, a theatre of sacrifice and valour, which they reached by the 16th of March 1917. From there, they ventured to the shores of Flanders.

As the seasons shifted, September of 1917 found them stationed in Ypres, where they steadfastly participated in the harrowing Battle of Poelcapelle. With determination, they then marched southward to the Somme, a name etched in history. On the fateful 21st of March 1918, the tumultuous tempest of the German Spring Offensive swept upon them at the Battle of St Quentin. Undaunted, they held their ground, and in the subsequent westward movement, they engaged in the Actions at the Somme Crossings—a chapter where destiny would unfold for Griffith.



In the crucible of battle, Griffith sustained wounds that would ultimately claim his life. Aged just 28, he passed away on the 28th of March 1918. His final resting place is Namps-Au-Val British Cemetery, France—an eternal abode where his bravery and sacrifice remain forever enshrined.

In humble tribute, we honour Griffith Lloyd, his unwavering courage, and the legacy he bestowed upon history. May his memory be a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

This marked another chapter in the history of this cemetery.

This another sad story which made me think of my family and what I would feel if this had happened to me. I was recording the details of a memorial stone of Mary Anthony (Plot PE2-D1) and took in the enormity of what I saw before me on the inscription.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
DAVID
SON OF DAVID & MARY ANTHONY
OF AQUEDUCT IN THIS PARISH WHO DIED
NOV 8, 1880, AGED 6 MONTHS
MARY ANTHONY
APRIL 27, 1884, AGED 29 YEARS
ALSO MARY DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE
BORN APRIL 27th, 1884, DIED APRIL 21st, 1901.

Indeed, the inscriptions on the memorial stones hold within them stories of heartbreak, loss, and the fragility of life. As you stood before the memorial stone of Mary Anthony, the weight of the narrative etched into the cold stone must have been palpable – a testament to the profound grief that can touch a family's life.

In the span of these few lines, a tale of tragedy and loss is woven, a tapestry of lives cut short, and hearts left shattered. The dates, the ages, and the relationships carved into the stone carry the weight of entire lifetimes condensed into a few words. The stark reality of Mary Anthony's story is heart-wrenching.

To lose a son at only 6 months old, to pass away at such a tender age of 29, and then, a cruel twist of fate, to bring a daughter into the world on the same day she herself would depart – it's a narrative that encapsulates the harshness of life's uncertainties. The story of Mary Anthony and her daughter Mary is a poignant reminder of the delicate balance between life and mortality, the fleeting nature of our existence.

Standing before that stone, the realization must have hit you with a wave of empathy and reflection. It's moments like these that make us pause and ponder our own lives, the lives of our loved ones, and the profound vulnerability that accompanies our journey through this world. Such stories bridge the gap between history and personal experience, making us realize that while time marches on, the emotions and the essence of human experience remain timeless.

As we contemplate the stories etched into these stones, may they inspire us to cherish the moments we have, to hold our loved ones a little closer, and to find meaning and purpose in the face of life's uncertainties. The vulnerability that you sensed in those inscriptions reminds us of the importance of compassion and understanding – for each life, no matter how brief, carries its own weight and significance in the grand tapestry of existence.

I've been dedicating my time and effort to meticulously record the cemetery memorials at Llandyry Church. This journey, undertaken in collaboration with the church warden, has been a profound and humbling experience. Today, I'm thrilled to share my reflections on this endeavour, hoping that you will find it as moving to read as I found it to live.

The process of documenting these memorials has been nothing short of overwhelming in the most touching way. Each gravestone represents a life – a story waiting to be uncovered, shared, and remembered. As I've walked among these silent sentinels, the weight of history has settled upon my shoulders, inviting me to honour the lives that once thrived within these hallowed grounds.

The gravestones transcend mere markers; they serve as windows into the past. The names, dates, and inscriptions etched into the stone unveil glimpses of triumphs and tribulations, joys, and sorrows. Each name is a thread in the rich tapestry of our shared human experience. Though weathered, these names still resonate, reminding us of lives once lived and connections that endure beyond time.

Continuing my exploration, I ventured to other local cemeteries such as Sardis Chapel, where I encountered fascinating individuals like Ivor Emanuel, Lance Corporal, 275, Welsh Guards:



Ivor Emanuel, hailing from Trimsaran, embodied the spirit of sacrifice ingrained in the village. Born to John and Mary Emanuel, Ivor entered matrimony with Prudence P. Richards in 1915, establishing a foundation of love that would sustain him through turbulent times. Initially enlisting with the Grenadier Guards in Llanelli, he later transferred to the newly formed Welsh Guards on February 26, 1915.



Belonging to the 1st Battalion of the Welsh Guards, Ivor's unit landed at Havre on August 18, 1915. Part of the 3rd Guards Brigade, Guards Division, this unit made history by being formed in France in the same month. The baptism by fire for Ivor and his comrades occurred during the Battle of Loos on September 25, 1915, a pivotal engagement in the Great War. Tragically, just two days later, on September 27, 1915, Ivor Emanuel paid the ultimate price for his courage, losing his life at the tender age of 23. His sacrifice is eternally commemorated on the Loos Memorial in France, serving as a poignant reminder of the cost of freedom.

I then came across an unassuming memorial stone with the Inscription on the top written in Welsh: -



ER COF PARCHUS AM
CHARLES ANWYL FAB DAVID AC ELIZABETH HARRIES,
ROSE HILL WAUN-Y-CLYN, O'R PLWYF HWN.
Cyfarfyddodd ag angau fel milwr dros ei wlad
yn Ffrainc, a chladdwyd ei weddillion yno
MAI 21, 1915, gan y 15th. Canadian Battalion
YN 27 MLWYDD OED.
Milwr aeth heb ymholiad - o'i fro draw
I fawr drin estronwlad;
Yno hyd fore'r caniad
Erys ei lwch, dros ei wlad. (Gwylfa)

I had to translate to see what it was: -

IN FOND MEMORY OF CHARLES,
BELOVED SON OF DAVID AND ELIZABETH HARRIES
ROSE HILL, WAUN Y CLUN, THIS PARISH
HE MET DEATH AS A SOLDIER FOR HIS COUNTRY
IN FRANCE AND WAS BURIED THERE
MAY 21, 1915, BY THE 15th CANADIAN BATTALION
AT THE AGE OF 27

He went a soldier without enquiry - from his native place
To big foreign battles;
There till the morning of the last trump
His dust remains, for his country.

Expanding further into the life of Charles Harries, Private, 17003, Royal Welsh Fusiliers:

Charles Harries, originating from Rosehill, Waunyclyn, Trimsaran, showcased a resilience that went beyond physical setbacks. Born to David and Elizabeth Harries, Charles made his initial attempt to enlist with the South Wales Borderers in September 1914. However, an ostensibly trivial hindrance—lack of teeth—resulted in his discharge within three weeks. Undeterred, Charles demonstrated unwavering determination, promptly re-enlisting, this time with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

Deployed to France on February 2, 1915, Charles became a part of the 1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, attached to the 22 Brigade, 7th Division in Flanders. His inaugural exposure to significant action transpired in March 1915 at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, followed by active engagements at Aubers Ridge and Festubert in May. Regrettably, during the Battle of Festubert on May 21, 1915, Charles Harries fell in action at the age of 27. His memory persists, commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, Richebourg L'Avoue, France—a poignant testament to his bravery and the sacrifices made by the men of Trimsaran in the relentless pursuit of a better world.

Surprising what you find from just a few words.



ALSO, OUR LOVING SON LIEUT. JOSEPH VINCENT HITCHINGS DIED JUNE 9 1944 AGED 32 YARS
REST IN PEACE

This is what we found out about Captain Joseph Vincent Hutchings, 1841-1915, Somerset Light Infantry, son of William and Miriam Hutchings of Cloverdale, Trimsaran. He served with the Somerset Light Infantry, dedicating his life to the service of his country. Tragically, Captain Hutchings made the ultimate sacrifice on June 9, 1944, at the age of 32.

His final resting place is in Trimaran (Sardis) Independent Chapel yard, a hallowed ground where the community honours his memory and pays tribute to the sacrifices made by local heroes.

Our journey still carries on in Sardis with our men who gave up their lives down the Coal Mines one such miner a Thomas David 1854-1923 one of ten who was involved in a mining disaster at Trimsaran Colliery and found these two editorials about the incident on 26 April 1923

Extract from Hanes Tabernacle 1872-1979 the mining disaster of 26 April 1923

Treasurer: Mr. Sidney Griffiths One of the next recorded events was the incident on April 26th, 1923. On this date, a serious accident occurred at the Trimsaran Colliery Caeduan. When the men were returning to the surface from their work, the shackles broke, and the 'spake' (the lift cage) plummeted to the bottom, causing the men with it, and in a few seconds, ten lives were lost, and half a hundred were injured.

The following Editorial from The Daily Mail the 27 April 1923 day after the tragedy which has been re-edited.

RUNAWAY TRUCKS IN MINE: TRAGIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS NINE LIVES

A devastating incident occurred at Trimaran Colliery, near Llanelly, in the Welsh anthracite coalfield, resulting in the loss of nine lives and numerous injuries. The morning shift had just concluded, and a string of trains carrying miners and tools was ascending the 1,400-yard-deep drift when tragedy struck.

As the trams ascended about 300 yards, a link in a shackle snapped, causing five trains to rapidly descend the drift. The runaway trains careened wildly for a distance before derailing and piling up in a chaotic scene. Seven miners lost their lives on the spot, while two succumbed to their injuries on the way to the

hospital. Approximately five miners sustained severe injuries, and around 20 others were less seriously hurt.

The cries of the injured and the loud crash attracted the attention of miners awaiting their turn at the bottom of the drift. They rushed to the scene and initiated rescue efforts. Despite swift action, it took hours to disentangle everyone from the wreckage. The injured were promptly transported to Llanelly hospital for treatment.

The victims of this tragic incident are:

David Tom Davies. 19 - Single

Morgan W Davies. 35

Thomas John. 70 – Married with grown up family

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237649478/thomas-john>

William Jenkins. 44 - Married with four children, an under Manager

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/260854093/william-jenkins>

Harold Herbert Parry 24 - Single

Harold Probert. 15 - Teenager

William John Rees. 28 - Single

Thomas Rogers. 20 - Single

Sidney Williams. 25 – Married with one child

Thomas Williams. 47 – Married with grown up family

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262034940/thomas-williams>

The highlight of my discovery at Sardis Chapel was the poignant story of a relative, Lilian May Rees, 1898-1924, affectionately known as Lily. She holds a significant place in my family tree, spanning approximately three generations. Here is her story:

The Mystery of the J. Rees Brass Twist Miners Tobacco Chewing Box

In February 2021 I was contacted by a Carrie Rees from Australia on My Heritage Family History site about our DNA Links on the site.

Initially we couldn't see a direct link but on Friday I revisited the site to look at the DNA section and I noticed that Carrie Rees was a match of 3rd-4th cousin and clicked on the review and this is where this lovely story started to unfold.

The DNA link to a Carrie Rees I found out we had a common Great Grandparents dating back to 1850's to John and Mary Lloyd following down from them to us both, one of their children was Lily (Lloyd) Rees who was Carrie Rees is Grandmother known as Lily and her husband was Thomas John Rees who was known as Johnny.

This is where it took a very unusual and interesting turn in my family, we have an heirloom Display Cabinet where there is what we thought was a Brass Snuff Box which has been in our family for a very long time, what is written on the Box is J REES BRYN COTTAGE TRIMSARAN on the front and on the back is Inscribed XMAS 1929 BOX I have been wondering who it had belonged to for a long time and suddenly wondered was this the same person.



Therefore, could this be that Thomas John Rees known as Jonny be the same "J Rees" on the Box with a little more research the Lloyd family which my mother and Grandmother were part of many of them had been born at Bryn Cottage.

Looking at the records at 1929 I found the Rees family would have been living there so the Snuff box must belong to Carrie Rees grandfather Thomas John Rees, so had I now finally solved the mystery but not why it was in my family care for all this time that's another story.

Following on from this I found out that Thomas wife Lily Rees is buried at Sardis Welsh Independent Chapel Cemetery in Trimsaran 3 miles from me, so I went and had a look

and guess what I found her grave, and I then took my cleaning stuff with me and cleaned her headstone up for her the first time in 98 yrs.

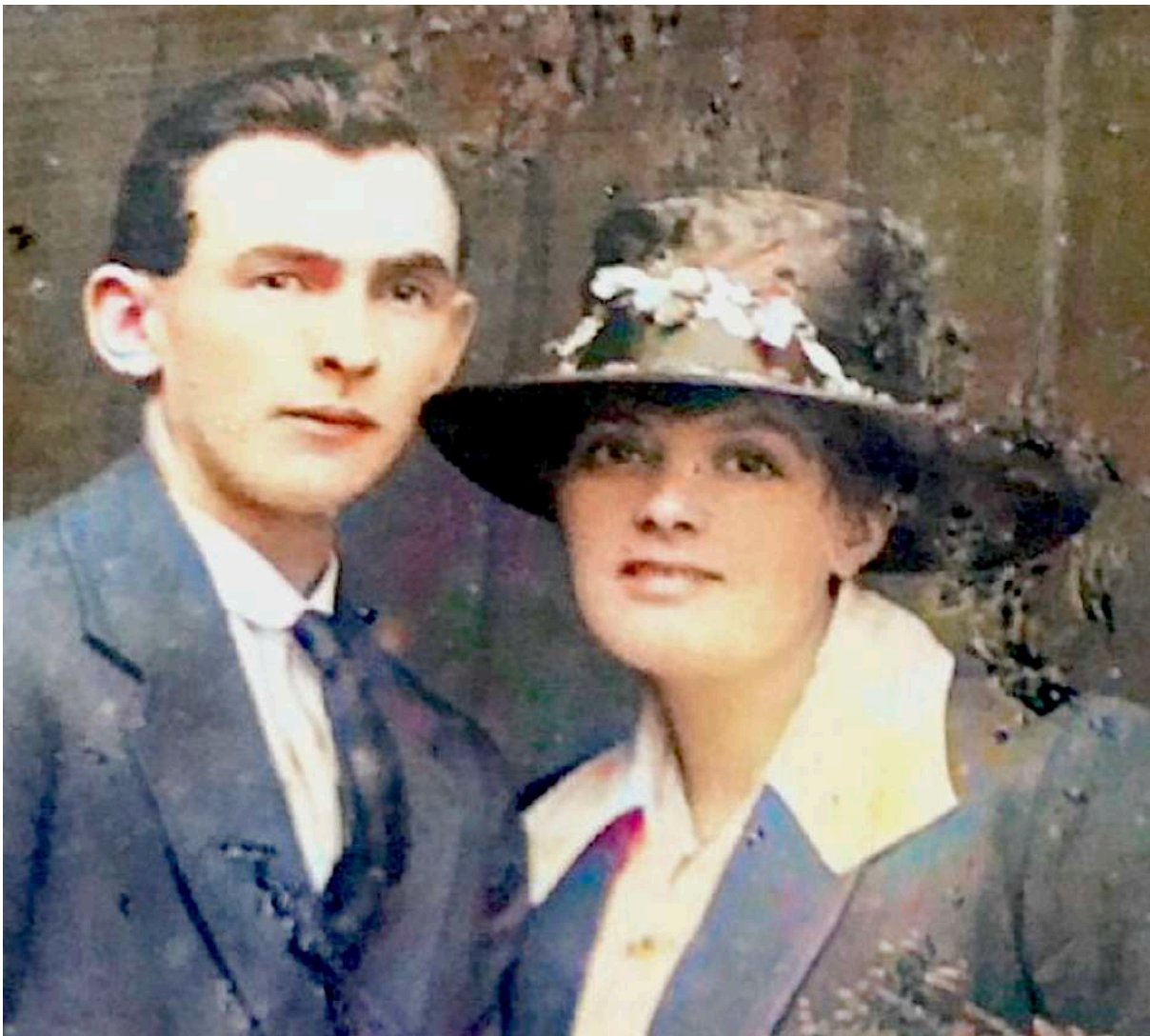


Her story is a sad one she was born on 9 September 1898, her father John, was 47 and her mother Mary was 43.

She had two sons and two daughters with her husband Thomas John Rees between 1920 and 1924.

She died as a young mother on 7 September 1924 in Trimsaran, Carmarthenshire, Wales at the age of 26.

I have found a black and white picture of Thomas and Lily when they were married that I colourised what a beautiful woman she was so now I can put a face of Thomas who received this Christmas present 93 years ago.



To finish this story off I have sent Carrie Rees a message through My Heritage to tell her I will be donating her Grandfathers Snuff Box as our Xmas Box to her for 2022 from our family 93 yrs. since Thomas received it in 1929.

I have had a reply today from Carrie willing to accept our families offer of returning her grandfather's Snuff Box to their family again.

This has been such an emotional ride for me it's given me the opportunity to get to know this couple and so sad that she lost her life so young with 4 young children in such a short time.

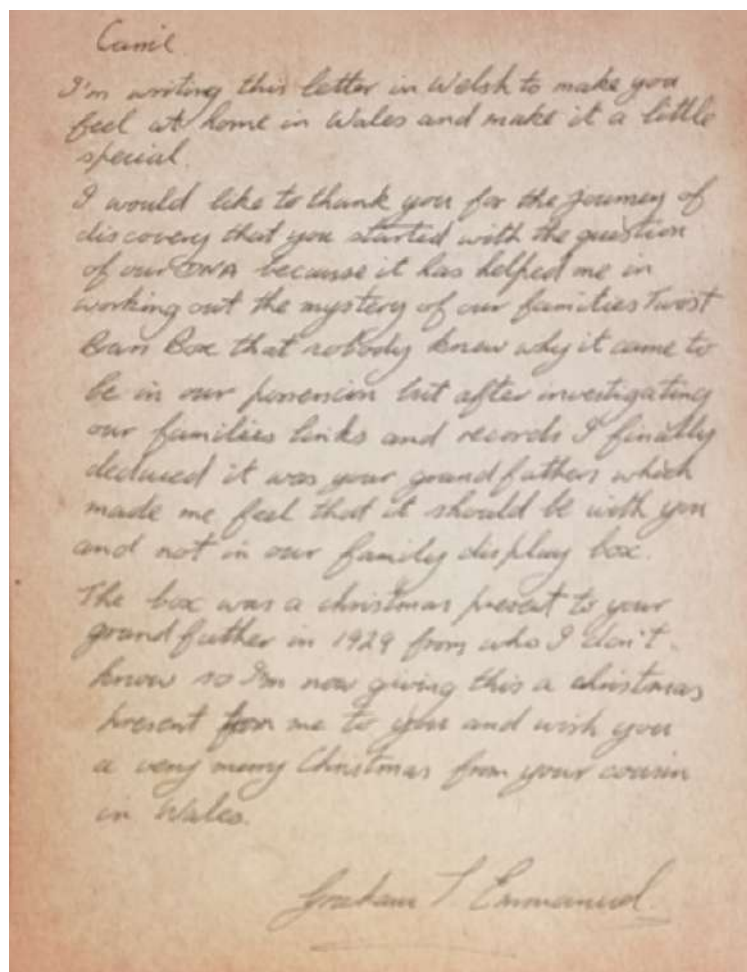
To also find out that Thomas and Lily's son Sergeant Alun Rees a Gunner in the RAF died on January 14, 1943, during World War II after being shot down over the sea in Zeeland Netherlands.

What a couple of days to have experienced all this as if it was meant to be for me to uncover so much about my family and their family from one Brass Snuff Box and what they were all about back over 100 years ago incredible.

The Journey Home

To make sure when I sent the Snuff Box which we later found out was called a Tobacco Twist Box which miners used underground to chew tobacco I decided to send then 3 letter one to thank them for taking me on a journey of discovery.

Then to translate one letter in Welsh so that they could feel that it was coming back to them from Wales that then in English and finally the story written down to what I have written above so in years to come their family will know what a journey this box has been on for 93 years.



Camil

I'm writing this letter in Welsh to make you feel at home in Wales and make it a little special.

I would like to thank you for the journey of discovery that you started with the question of our DNA because it has helped me in working out the mystery of our families twist Brass Box that nobody knew why it came to be in our possession but after investigating our families links and records I finally deduced it was your grand father's which made me feel that it should be with you and not in our family display box.

The box was a Christmas present to your grand father in 1929 from who I don't know so I'm now giving this a Christmas present for me to you and wish you a very merry Christmas from your cousin in Wales.

Graham J. Emmanuel

Cwmel
 Dwi'n ysgrifennu'r llythyr yma yn
 bymraeg i wneud i chi deimlo'n gastrol
 yng Nghymru ac i wneud y llythyr bach
 yn arbennig.
 Hoffaf i ddiolch i chi am y deuth o
 ddaroganfyddiad bod ti wedi dechrau gyda'r
 caestun o'r DNA gan ei fod wedi helpu fi
 i weithio mas y dirlawch o'r boes Pres Troell
 yn ein teulu.
 Doedd neb yn gwybod sut oedd y boes wedi
 dod yn ein heiddo, ond ar ôl ymchwilio ein
 cyngylliadau teuluol a chyfnodau unes i o'r
 ddiwedd diddwytho mae boes yn berchen dy
 Tadau.
 Mae hwn yn gwneud i fi deimlo tan dylair boes
 bod gyda chi ac nid yn boes dengorsydel ein
 teulu.
 Roedd y boes yma yn amlyg Nadolig i dy
 Tadau yn 1929, ddiwedd ym gwybod o lawr.
 Felly, hoffaf i roi hwn i ti fel amlyg Nadolig
 chi'n ei i ti ac i ddiwedd Nadolig llwyr
 hysur o dy gyfnod yng Nghymru.
 Graham J. Emmanuel

Trimsaran, a village of remarkable character and resilience, has woven an extraordinary tapestry of history. From the echoes of its industrial past to the indelible marks left by generations of inhabitants, this community stands as a testament to strength, adaptability, and shared heritage. The legacy of Trimsaran, imprinted in the hearts of those who have called it home, resonates with the stories of hard work, unity, and the enduring spirit that has shaped the lives of its people. As we explore the rich history of this village, we celebrate the enduring legacy it has bequeathed to all who have been fortunate to be a part of its narrative.

Finding Myself Through Loss and Mobile Technology

On the 4th of July 2015, in the height of summer, my world was shattered. I said goodbye to the love of my life, Linda. She had fought a relentless battle with a brain tumour, facing it with unwavering courage and grace. But in the end, even her incredible spirit couldn't overcome it. Her absence left a void so vast that I found myself lost, navigating the tumultuous waves of grief with no anchor. For nearly three years, I carried the weight of that loss, trapped in memories while struggling to face a future without her. The pain was constant, and I often wondered if I would ever find a way to heal, to move forward.



Then, one day, while sitting with a cup of tea, I reflected on the past four years and realised just how much my life had changed. It all started when I decided to have a campervan made for me—a decision that would set me on a path I never could have imagined. Alongside me was my new travel companion, Lizzy, a lively little Jug (a cross between a Jack Russell and a Pug).

At first, the journey was anything but smooth. The day I got the van, I realised I knew absolutely nothing about living or travelling in one. I didn't even know how to change and service the toilet! Too embarrassed to ask anyone, I turned to YouTube, and, well—problem solved. That became my new way of life: trial and error, learning as I went, embracing the "suck it and see what happens" approach.

That first year on the road taught me a lot, and not just about campervans. I learned that I was carrying far more baggage—both physically and emotionally—than I needed. I had no real plan, no structure, just an endless road ahead of me. I was traveling aimlessly, moving from place to place without truly taking it all in.

Then, a year into this nomadic life, Lizzy and I left Wales for a trip with no set destination. I remember thinking, For Christ's sake, Graham, have a plan! But I didn't. That's what grief does to you. It leaves you lost in yourself, uncertain of how to move forward. You wake up each day with no real direction—just hoping that something, anything, will happen.

But something did happen.

April 17, 2018, is a date that will be forever embedded in my mind. It was the moment my journey truly began—not just a journey of travel, but a journey to rediscover who I was. As I explored breath-taking landscapes and places I had never seen before, I began to find a new sense of purpose. Travelling wasn't just about moving anymore; it became an addiction, a passion, a way to heal.

What started as a one-week plan stretched into two, and before I knew it, Lizzy and I had made our way up to Scotland, taking in the sights. Every day, I found myself thinking, this is brilliant. I wonder what's next. Then, one morning, I glanced at my Collins map and noticed a dotted line stretching from Scotland to Ireland. Must be a ferry, I thought. And sure enough, it was.

We boarded a ferry from Cairnryan to Larne and soon found ourselves in Northern Ireland, staying at Dundonald Caravan Park. Belfast welcomed us with open arms, and the kindness of fellow travellers—especially other Jug owners—made my stay unforgettable.

From there, we followed the North Coast, eventually reaching Derry.

And that's when I discovered something that would change everything.

The Great Wild Atlantic Way.

The moment I learned about it, I thought, wow—what a journey this could be. And it truly was. For the next five weeks, we travelled along one of the most stunning routes in the world. I witnessed sights that were nothing short of breath-taking and met people whose warmth and kindness left a lasting mark on me.



That trip wasn't just about exploring new places—it was about rediscovering myself. It was the turning point that set me on the path to becoming a digital research historian, developing the skills that would shape my future.



From grief to adventure, from being lost to finding my purpose—this is my journey. And this is just the beginning.

This was when I knew that I had finally found out who I was as a person and a better one after this long trip.

I wasn't so tearful anymore and I knew why my Linda had encouraged me to travel as she knew that this was the only way I was going to be able to move forward in my life and finally be able to live again and take each day as it comes and love life at last.

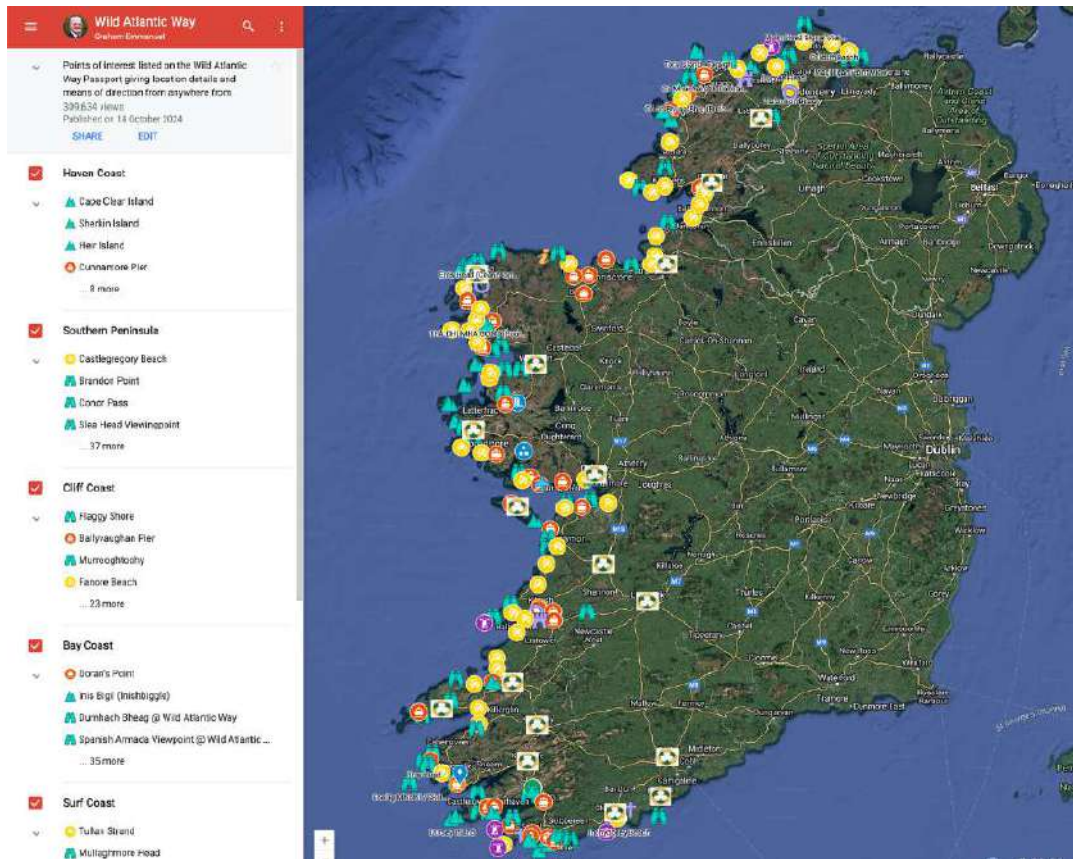
Mapping My Journey: Discovering Digital Cartography

After my first major trip in 2018, during which I often found myself lost on my travels, I realised I needed a better way to navigate and plan my routes. That's when I came across a YouTube video about creating custom maps using Google MyMaps. Intrigued, I decided to give it a go.

I started by meticulously plotting a detailed map of the Wild Atlantic Way, documenting every location included in the **Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way** map. What began as a simple tool for my own travels quickly turned into something much more—a passion for mapping and documenting historical and cultural sites. This newfound interest in digital research and cartography would soon shape the next chapter of my journey, leading me toward an entirely new career path.

Learning to Use MyMaps: A Journey of Trial and Error

This is where I discovered how to use **Google MyMaps**, and it was a real learning curve. It took me many attempts and mistakes to understand how it all worked. But through persistence, I eventually figured it out and used it to document my travels.



<https://tinyurl.com/Wild-Atlantic-Way-2018>

To make things easier for beginners, I have written a simple guide on how to get started with **Google MyMaps**. Here it is:

Getting Started with Google MyMaps: A Beginner's Guide

1. **Open Google MyMaps**
 - Go to Google MyMaps.
 - Click "**Create a new map.**"
2. **Add a Base Map**
 - At the bottom of the map, click "**Base map**" to change the style (e.g., satellite, terrain, or default map view).
3. **Adding Locations (Pins/Markers)**
 - Click on the "**Add marker**" tool (pin icon).
 - Click on the map where you want to add a location.
 - Name the location and add details like descriptions, links, or photos.

4. **Drawing Routes and Paths**
 - Click on the "Draw a line" tool (line icon).
 - Choose "Add a driving, biking, or walking route" and click on your start and end points.
 - Adjust the route by dragging points.
5. **Creating Layers (For Organizing Places)**
 - Click "Add Layer" to organize your locations (e.g., separate layers for accommodations, landmarks, and campsites).
 - You can hide or show layers as needed.
6. **Customizing Your Map**
 - Click on a marker or route to edit colours, icons, or descriptions.
 - Use different colours for different categories (e.g., blue for water-related sites, green for forests).
7. **Saving and Sharing Your Map**
 - Click "Share" in the top-right corner.
 - Choose who can view or edit the map (private, public, or shared via a link).
8. **Accessing Your Map on Mobile**
 - Open the **Google Maps app** on your phone.
 - Tap "Saved" > "Maps" to view your custom maps.

Links to How to Video's in Youtube

<https://tinyurl.com/MyMap-Tutorials-123>

With practice, you'll be able to create detailed travel maps just like I did. Start experimenting, and don't worry about making mistakes—every mistake is just another step toward mastering it!

Surveying Llandryr Cemetery: A New Historical Project

My next project came about purely by chance. While exploring **Llandryr Church cemetery near Trimsaran**, I met the church warden, and our conversation soon turned to the idea of **documenting the graves**. Since I had already researched and recorded many of my **own family ancestors**, I offered to help him set something up. However, what began as a small project soon escalated, I ended up **surveying the entire cemetery**.



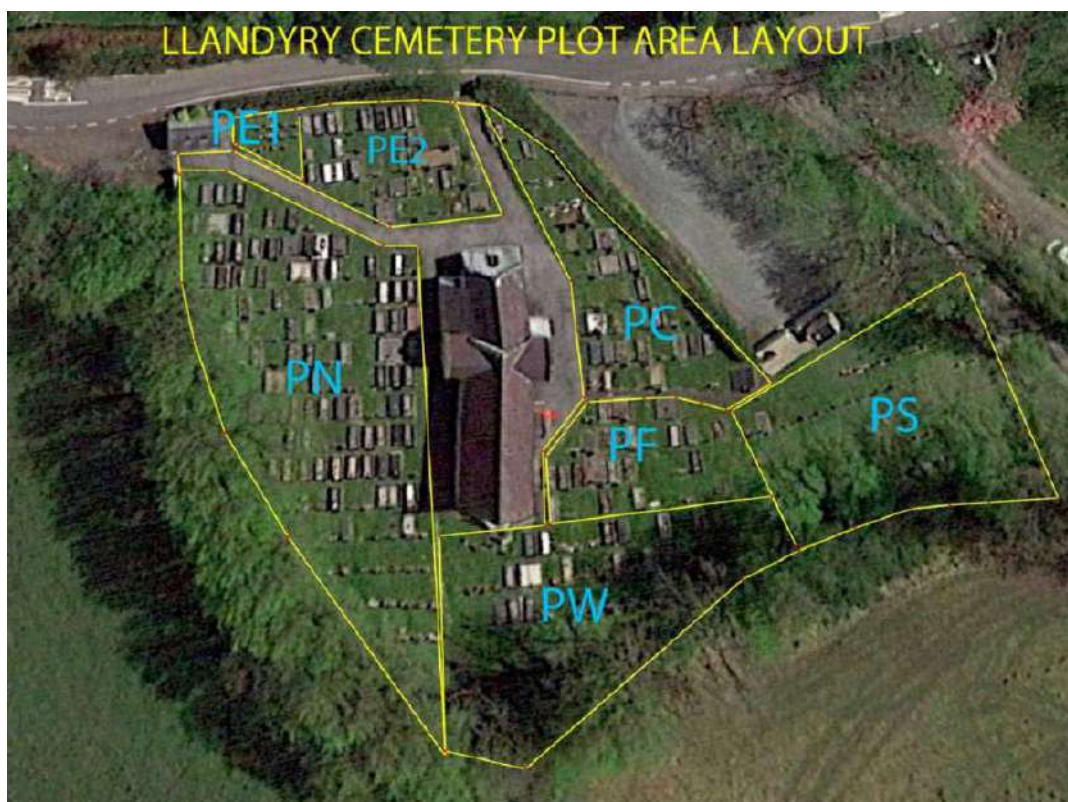
To efficiently record the memorials, I decided to **utilise the power of my Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra**. At first, the process was quite **time-consuming**, so I started looking for apps that could simplify and speed up the work. That's when I discovered the **Find a Grave** app, a tool specifically designed for documenting and preserving cemetery records.

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Using **Find a Grave**, I was able to:

- ✔ **Photograph** and upload headstones directly from my phone.
- ✔ **Tag and categorize** graves, ensuring accurate records.
- ✔ **Link family members** within the app to create detailed family connections.
- ✔ **Share and contribute** to a wider genealogical database.

Before I could begin photographing efficiently, I needed to create a **structured grid layout** of the cemetery. I used **Google Earth's Path creation tool** to design a **sectioned map**, then took a **screenshot** and edited it in **Adobe's photo editing software** to finalise a **clear, structured reference**. This helped me **systematically survey each section** without missing any graves.



What started as a simple conversation turned into a **historical documentation project**, allowing me to **preserve local history** while sharpening my skills in digital surveying. This experience would go on to shape the way I approached **historical research and cemetery documentation** in the years to come.

My Journey into Digital Research Methodology

I never planned to become a memorial researcher. I didn't start with a system or a strategy. I started with a question—and a name.

While helping to document Llandyry Churchyard near Trimsaran, I uncovered a small, half-buried stone. It turned out to be a memorial—not a grave—to a young man named Leonard Frater. That moment sparked something in me. I wanted to know who he was, where he came from, and why he was remembered there.

That single discovery led me down a path I never expected. I began researching local war memorials in Kidwelly, Pembrey, and Burry Port. But I quickly realised that many names were missing individuals who had served and died but weren't listed on public memorials. Some were remembered only on headstones in quiet cemeteries. Others had no visible tribute at all.



As I've frequented the church in my pursuit to locate and document each family member's grave, fate threw me a chance meeting with a remarkable individual – Declan Owens, the Llandyry Church Warden. Conversations flowed, and I learned that he was deeply involved in a project to meticulously document all those laid to rest in the church cemetery. The dedication to this endeavour was evident in the beautifully maintained grounds that cradled the history of countless souls.

Eager to contribute, I eagerly delved into their existing documentation plan. However, it soon became clear that this system was not as comprehensive and up to date as it needed to be, especially with the constant addition of new graves. Recognizing an opportunity to lend my expertise, I proposed a more efficient approach to memorial documentation.

In the span of just a week, I crafted a new system. Armed with a Word document and grid reference numbers, I meticulously recorded each memorial's details, capturing their essence through photographs of the weathered gravestones.

Then, a seamless transition to modern technology occurred as I harnessed the power of Google Lens to transcribe the scanned text information onto the Findagrave Cemetery site. This dynamic duo of Word and Lens, further enriched by Google Translate, bridged the language gap, allowing a wider audience to appreciate the inscriptions, many of which were in Welsh.

This endeavour has sparked an unexpected joy within me. Beyond the act of documentation, it's the harmonious fusion of tradition and technology that fuels my enthusiasm. My system guarantees accuracy, with any discrepancies promptly rectified and preserved. The magnitude of completing this feat is not lost on me; a swell of pride accompanies each entry made.

Although the task ahead is formidable and demanding, I embrace every step with open arms. Yet, I yearn for a local ally, someone well-versed in the intricacies of the app, who could expedite the process. Currently, my routine includes on-site visits to acquire GPS coordinates, ensuring seamless integration with the larger project's framework.

The potential impact of this collective effort is deeply stirring. The preservation of the church's history feels like a sacred duty, and I'm humbled to play a part. With unwavering dedication, I press on, anticipating the day when this project reaches its culmination. In my record-keeping, I've also thoughtfully logged the locations of unmarked graves, providing reference points for the future.

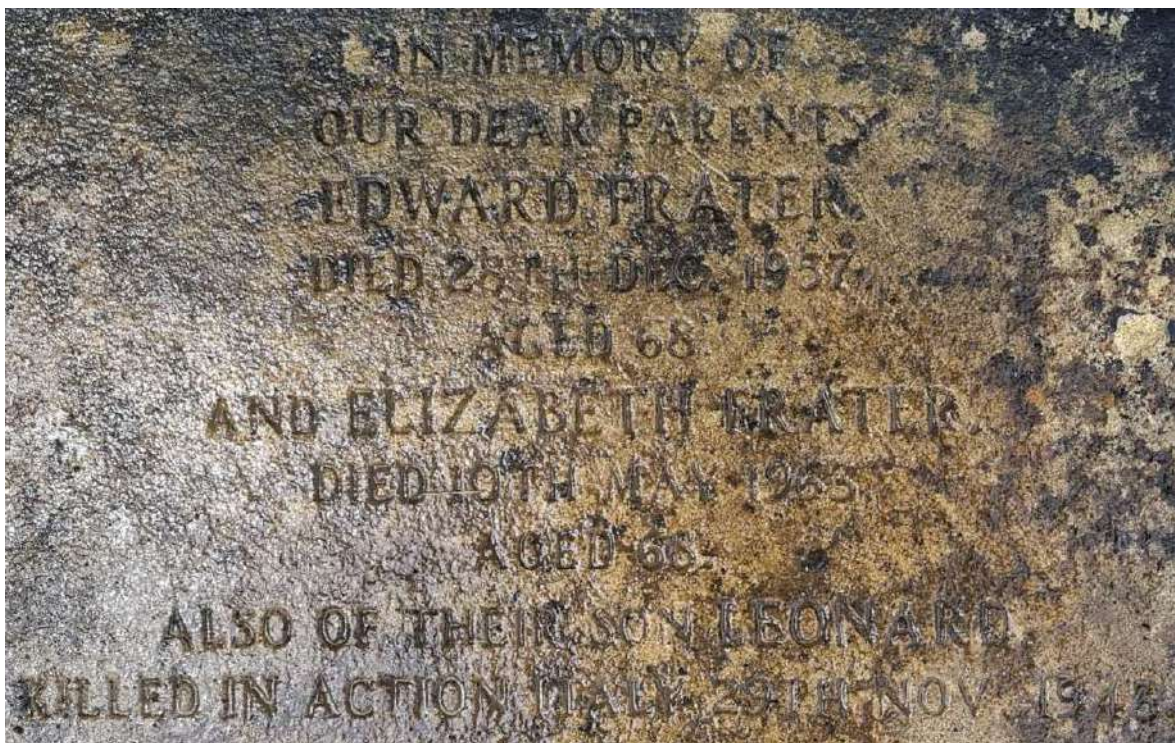
Today has been especially profound. My collaboration with Declan Owens in the Llandry Cemetery memorial documentation has yielded rich rewards. Simultaneously, my exploration of ancestral roots through Findagrave has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. In a remarkable twist of fate, I embarked on a mission to restore their stories.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance. humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave. It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

It is from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19th November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR PARENTS
EDWARD FRATER
DIED 29TH DEC 1957
AGED 68.
AND ELIZABETH FRATER
DIED 10TH MAY 1963
AGED 68
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed

Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55914830/leonard-frater#add-to-vc>

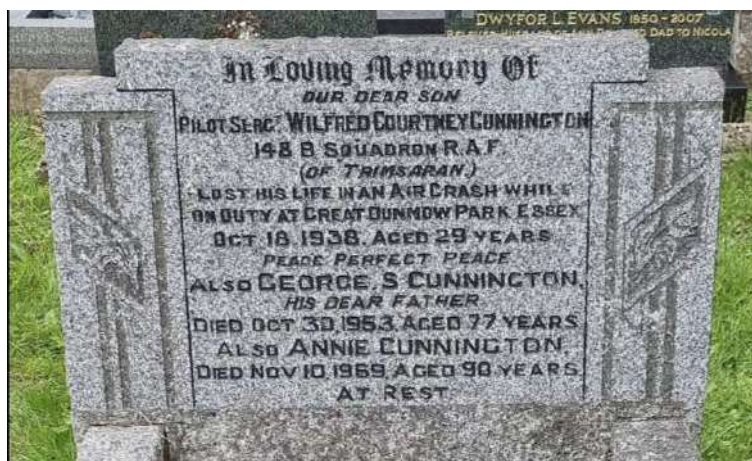
Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

In Loving Memory of
OUR DEAR SON
PILOT SERGEANT WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON
148 B SQUADRON RAF
(OF TRIMSARAN)
LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE
ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX
OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS
PEACE PERFECT PEACE"



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/257664361/wilfred-courtney-cunnington>



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

The Hughes Brothers: A Family's Sacrifice

The next step in my journey came from a chance comment during a meeting of the Kidwelly British Legion. As preparations began for the upcoming D-Day commemorations in 2024, someone asked, “*Does anyone know anything about the Hughes brothers?*” That question stayed with me—and led me to uncover a story that deserves to be remembered.

What I found was heart-breaking.

The Hughes family of Kidwelly endured unimaginable grief during the Great War. John and Margaret Hughes lost not one, but three sons—William, Samuel, and David—all of whom answered the call to serve their country, and all of whom made the ultimate sacrifice. Their stories are a poignant reminder of the personal cost of war, and the quiet heroism of families who bore its weight.

William Henry Hughes

Private William Henry Hughes, No. 35648, Machine Gun Corps Born in Kidwelly in 1886, William was the eldest of the three brothers. He married Mary Anne Morgan in 1906, and they lived at 52 Water Street, Kidwelly. At the outbreak of war, William enlisted in Carmarthen into the Gloucestershire Regiment, later transferring to the 5th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps, attached to the 5th Division.

This division played a significant role in the Somme Offensive, engaging in fierce battles at High Wood, Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, and Le Transloy. After suffering heavy casualties, the division moved to Festubert in October 1916, remaining there until March 1917. William was killed in action on 16 April 1917 during the Battle of Vimy. He is commemorated at the Bois-Carre British Cemetery in Thelus, France.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56183210/william_henry-hughes

Samuel Hughes

Private Samuel Hughes, No. 12535, Royal Welsh Fusiliers Samuel married Beatrice Jones in 1912, and they lived at 14 Gwendraeth Town, Kidwelly. He enlisted in Llanelli into the 8th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, part of the 40th Brigade, 13th (Western) Division. His unit saw extensive action in Gallipoli, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

It was in Mesopotamia that Samuel fell ill. Despite returning home for treatment, he died of sickness on 12 March 1918, aged just 27. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Kidwelly—his final resting place in the town he called home.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/211538467/samuel-hughes>

David Hughes

David Hughes was the son of John and Margaret Hughes of Kidwelly. He married Mary Emily Musk in 1907 at Seven Sisters, and the couple lived at 20 Bryndulais Row, Seven Sisters. Before the war, David worked at the Yniscedwen Tinsplate Works in Ystalyfera.

He enlisted at Ystradgynlais into the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. His battalion began its wartime service in China, where they successfully captured the German garrison at Tientsin. Following this, they returned to England and joined the 87th Brigade, 29th Division.

The Division was then deployed to Gallipoli via Egypt, landing on 25 April 1915. They remained in Gallipoli until the evacuation to Egypt on 11 January 1916. From there, they moved to the Western Front on 15 March 1916.

David was killed in action on 6 April 1916, during the battalion's first spell in the trenches. He was 30 years old. He is buried at Mesnil Ridge Cemetery in Mesnil Martinsart, France.

David was one of three brothers from the Hughes family who lost their lives in the Great War a tragic testament to the depth of sacrifice borne by so many families.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58988842/d-hughes>

A Legacy of Bravery

The story of the Hughes brothers is not just a tale of military service it is a testament to the quiet courage of a family who gave everything. Their names may be etched in stone, but their memory lives on in the hearts of those who continue to honour their sacrifice.

Their story is one of many I've uncovered each one a thread in the tapestry of remembrance that continues to grow. And it all began with a simple question.

The Kidwelly War Memorial 100th Anniversary

The next phase of my journey was sparked by the 100th anniversary of the Kidwelly War Memorial. During a visit to St Mary's Church, I noticed two memorial plaques on the church walls one for the First World War, the other for the Second. I stood there, looking at the names carved in stone, and found myself asking: *Who were these men?*

They were just names. No stories. No faces. That moment stirred something in me I wanted to know more.

It was the beginning of my learning curve. I had no formal training, no research background. Just a mobile phone in my hand. I took photographs of the memorials and began to dig. What started as a simple act of curiosity quickly became a two-year quest not only into memorial research, but into the history of the RAF and the lives behind the inscriptions.

Unintentionally at first, I began to teach myself how to gather data, cross-reference records, and use digital tools to uncover forgotten stories. That quiet moment in St Mary's Church became the foundation of everything that followed.

To the Glory of God and in memory of the fallen from this Parish. 1914-1919



IN HONOURED MEMORY
OF
THE MEN OF THIS PARISH
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE WAR
1939-45



What a pleasure—and a humbling experience—it has been to research these men. As I uncovered their stories, I found myself developing new skills I never expected to learn. At the time, I didn't realise where this path would lead. What began as a simple act of curiosity became a journey of discovery... and ultimately, a journey of knowledge.

Through this work, I've come to understand that remembrance is not just about the fallen. It's about the families left behind. The communities forever changed. And the countless quiet acts of bravery carried out in the face of hardship.

Kidwelly was the beginning. And it taught me that every name carved in stone carries a story waiting to be told.

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Fallen-Hero>



All of the above entries were carefully researched and edited for accuracy and clarity, then integrated into *Find A Grave* memorials. Where appropriate, I submitted corrections and additions—99% of which were accepted as accurate by the platform.

To enrich each tribute, I also used AI tools to enhance the historical context, particularly focusing on the battles and campaigns occurring on the day everyone died.

This allowed me to place their sacrifice within a broader narrative, giving depth to their stories and honouring their service with greater understanding.

Kidwelly War Memorials World Cemeteries



"This was the moment I realised I could use my map-making skills to trace where each serviceman was buried or commemorated giving their stories a place on the landscape as well as in memory.

It came quite naturally to me. I'd already developed those skills through years of travelling, wandering the length and breadth of the UK with Google MyMaps as my companion. What had once helped me explore the country now became a tool for honouring its history."

From Alexandria (Chatby) Military Cemetery to the Tower Hill Memorial in London

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-War-Cemeteries-Map>



RAF Crash Research: A Question That Changed Everything

What began for me as a passing question about a wartime plane crash grew into something much deeper—a connection to place, to people, and to a history I never expected to find so compelling.

It's surprising how a simple question can open the door to an entirely new realm of research. That moment came in 2024, when Seimon Pugh-Jones—a military historian and curator of a mobile military museum—asked me: “*Have you ever heard of a plane crashing on the mountain near Pwll?*”

That question set me on a path of deep investigation. I wanted to know what happened, where it happened, and how. But I had no idea it would lead me to document and log every RAF aircraft crash in Wales.

The aircraft in question, named *Mi Laine*, was caught in thick fog on 4 June 1943 while descending in search of a safe landing site. Tragically, it flew into a hay barn at Penrhyn Farm in Pwll, near Llanelli, and exploded on impact.

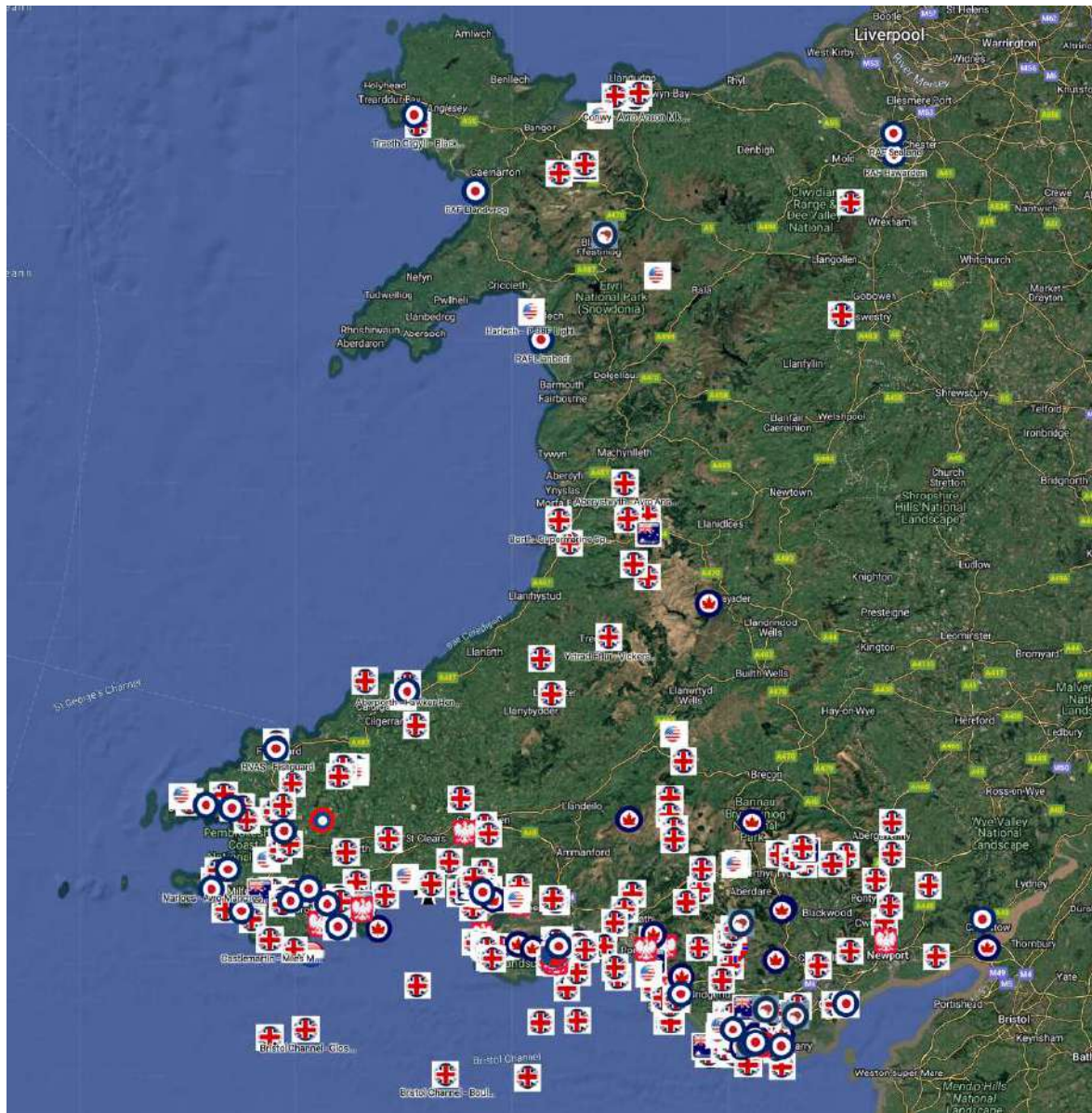
According to the official report, the *B-26 Marauder* was on a squadron transfer flight from Port Lyautey, Morocco, to RAF St Eval in Cornwall. The crash occurred at approximately 16:15 hours, three miles southeast of RAF Pembrey. The aircraft was assigned to the VIII Air Force Bomber Command, 322nd Bomb Group, 449th Bomb Squadron.



<https://tinyurl.com/B26-Bomber-Crash> (link opens in new window)



Mapping RAF Losses Across Wales



The crash of Mi Laine B26 Marauder began mapping each location using **Google MyMaps**, researching crash reports, identifying the airmen who perished during training, and logging their graves in *Find A Grave*. From there, I created a **Virtual Cemetery** a digital space to honour everyone, complete with interactive links that guide the reader through their stories.

Much of the data was supported by two key sources:

- The **Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) Project 126: Military Aircraft Crash Sites in South Wales** (March 2013)
- **Dyfed Archaeological Trust**
- The **Polish Fighter Squadron 316 Project** based in Llanelli.

Together, these resources offered comprehensive insights into South Wales’s aviation history and the impact of wartime conflict on its landscape.

To achieve this, I drew on a wide range of tools:

- **ChatGPT AI**, to help interpret and contextualize crash data.
- **Google Lens**, to extract text from scanned crash reports and archival images.
- The **Scottish Library’s historical map database**, to locate crash sites using vintage cartography.
- A **side-by-side map feature**, displaying 1945 maps of the event date on the left and modern maps on the right, which helped identify locations that no longer exist in today’s terrain.

One example stands out: a witness report stated that a plane had crashed “one mile northeast of a certain farm.” Using the historical map, I located the farm’s original position. Then, in **Google Earth**, I rotated the view so that northeast aligned correctly. I used the measuring tool, set to miles, and marked one mile northeast from the farm’s location. This gave me an accurate GPS coordinate for the crash site.

This is how I’ve combined historical records, modern mapping, and digital tools to uncover and preserve these forgotten stories. Each crash site is more than a point on a map it’s a place of memory, now rediscovered.

<https://tinyurl.com/WW2-SW-CS>



<https://tinyurl.com/WW2-Crash-Reports> (link opens in new window)



<https://tinyurl.com/RAF-WW2-Wales-Memorials>



Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project



The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project began with a simple but profound observation: not all those who served and died in wartime were fully represented on public memorials.

What initially appeared to be complete records revealed omissions individuals commemorated only on headstones, in church plaques, or in family records, but absent from the central monuments in Pembrey and Burry Port.

This realisation marked the beginning of a sustained and methodical effort to restore visibility and dignity to those overlooked. The project began with field visits to local cemeteries and churches, where names were transcribed, photographed, and cross-referenced with archival

sources. Using digital tools such as Find A Grave, each individual was researched, verified, and documented with biographical detail, burial information, and historical context.

As the work progressed, it became clear that traditional methods alone could not capture the full scope of remembrance. To address this, the project integrated modern mapping technologies, notably Google MyMaps, to create an interactive memorial landscape.

Each serviceman's burial or commemorative site was geo-tagged, linked to their digital memorial, and annotated with QR codes, plot numbers, and contextual notes. This allowed for a layered experience one that combined physical location with historical narrative.

The project also embraced bilingual documentation, ensuring accessibility for both English and Welsh-speaking communities. Translation tools and AI-assisted research were employed to interpret inscriptions and enhance the accuracy of historical data. Where discrepancies were found, corrections were submitted to Find A Grave, with a 99% acceptance rate, affirming the reliability and depth of the research.

What began as a local initiative has evolved into a comprehensive and inclusive model of memorialisation. The project now stands as a living archive one that not only preserves history but invites engagement.

It has been recognised by heritage professionals, clergy, and members of the British Legion for its originality and emotional resonance. By blending fieldwork, archival precision, and digital innovation, the Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project offers a new standard for community remembrance.

It is, at its core, a tribute: to those who served, to the families who endured loss, and to the communities shaped by conflict. And it continues to grow—not as a finished record, but as an open invitation to remember more fully, more accurately, and more compassionately.

<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Memorials-Ledger-Master-FV>



<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Virtual-Cemetery>



Project Summary: Mapping Memory and Restoring Identity

This work represents the culmination of a multi-year, multi-disciplinary effort to document, preserve, and honour the lives of those who served and sacrificed during wartime particularly those whose stories have been overlooked or fragmented across time. Through a combination of fieldwork, archival research, digital mapping, and collaborative outreach, the project has evolved into a comprehensive and inclusive model of memorialisation.

Beginning with the memorials of Kidwelly and expanding into the **Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project**, the research uncovered individuals missing from public monuments and restored their presence through updated biographies, geo-tagged grave records, and bilingual documentation. The project also includes a distinct tribute to **Merchant Navy personnel**, recognising their unique service and commemorating them as a separate entity within the broader memorial framework.

A pivotal chapter emerged in 2024, when a question about a wartime plane crash near Pwll led to the creation of a **digital map of RAF training crash sites across Wales**. This initiative documented over 280 aircrew casualties, integrating crash reports, burial data, and GPS coordinates into an interactive platform. Data was drawn from key sources including the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT 126) and the Polish Fighter Squadron 316 Project, and enhanced through tools such as Google MyMaps, Find A Grave, historical map overlays, and AI-assisted interpretation.

The result is a **living archive** a digital memorial landscape that blends emotional resonance with technical precision. It offers a new standard for remembrance: one that is accessible, accurate, and deeply human. It honours not only the fallen, but the communities shaped by their loss, and the quiet acts of remembrance that continue to echo across generations.

This work is not a conclusion, but a foundation. It invites others to engage, contribute, and carry forward the mission of inclusive remembrance. It stands as a testament to what can be achieved when curiosity meets compassion, and when history is approached not just as record—but as responsibility.

<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-T-Emmanuel-PCW>



<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-Emmanuel-Profile>



Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

*A Blueprint for
21st-Century Remembrance*



Introduction: From Idea to Innovation

What began as a simple effort to record and preserve the stories behind our community's war memorials has evolved into something far greater a world-first in digital remembrance.

Over two years of research, mapping, and collaboration have transformed a personal project into a pioneering model that bridges traditional craftsmanship with modern technology.

This is the story behind that journey one whose true significance only became clear upon its fruition.

At the heart of this achievement is what has come to be known as a *Fourth-Generation Memorial* the next step in how we remember.

Earlier generations of remembrance relied on stone monuments, written archives, or online records, but this new approach unites them all.

By embedding a weather resistant QR code directly into the granite monument, visitors can access verified biographies, photographs, service histories, and global burial locations in seconds.

This innovation transforms remembrance from something static into something living, interactive, and enduring allowing every engraved name to connect with its full story.

Through the support of local partners, the Town Council, and the People's Collection of Wales, the project ensures that memory, identity, and sacrifice will remain visible, meaningful, and preserved for generations to come.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel



I am a dedicated historical researcher and digital curator; I am passionate about preserving and sharing our past's rich tapestry. My work involves uncovering historical data from sources such as archaeological reports and books and curating it into comprehensive digital formats. By integrating maps, images, and interactive elements, I create immersive experiences that allow individuals to explore history in a personal and engaging way.

My research spans a diverse range of subjects, including religious sites, World War I and II memorials, RAF crash sites, local history, and family heritage. Through meticulous linking of specific items, I strive to bring history to life, enabling meaningful and interactive connections with the past.

To support my research, I utilise a variety of technologies, including mobile phone applications for scanning historical documents, AI tools for editing and translation, and specialised apps for documenting grave memorials and collecting historical data during site visits. I share my findings through platforms like Findagrave and Ancestry, aiding others in connecting with their heritage and uncovering valuable information. Additionally, I create custom Google My Maps that complement specific topics, providing an interactive and visual exploration of historical locations and events.

While my approach to historical research embraces modern technology, a departure from traditional methods, I believe it is essential for making history accessible and engaging. I am committed to leveraging digital tools to share historical treasures with a wider audience, as exemplified by my contributions to The People's Collection of Wales.

Through my work, I aim to inspire others to explore and engage with the past in new and immersive ways.

<https://tinyurl.com/Graham-Emmanuel-Profile>



The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

A Blueprint for 21st-Century Remembrance



This document outlines the **Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project**, a globally pioneering initiative that redefines the preservation of community sacrifice through the integration of traditional monument design and advanced digital heritage architecture. The project moves beyond static commemoration to create a dynamic, accessible, and perpetually enduring system of memory.

<https://tinyurl.com/PBP-Memorials-PCW-QR-Link>



I. The Core Innovation: A Fourth-Generation Memorial

The project introduces and validates the concept of a **Fourth-Generation Memorial**, an architectural model that ensures both physical permanence and digital longevity.

- **Integrated Design:** A traditional granite monument is seamlessly united with a custom-fabricated, weather-resistant **porcelain-inlaid QR code**.
- **National Archival Security:** This code links directly to a secure, verified digital archive hosted on **People's Collection Wales**, a national heritage repository. This crucial partnership guarantees the long-term preservation and accessibility of the data, securing the legacy against future technological obsolescence.
- **Interactive Access:** Visitors are taken beyond engraved names to access rich, **geo-mapped service records, biographies, and global commemoration sites**, illustrating the international reach of local sacrifice.

II. Global Distinction and Strategic Value

Independent analysis confirms that this project is unique on a global scale. No other community or national institution has successfully merged this level of:

Element	Significance
Verified Biographical Data	Ensures the historical accuracy and integrity of the archival content.
Geo-Linked Global Records	Connects the local community to cemeteries and memorials worldwide via interactive mapping.
National Heritage Hosting	Safeguards the entire digital ecosystem within a public, non-commercial, and nationally validated archive.

III. Legacy and Replicable Model

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is not only a tribute but a **validated, replicable blueprint** for communities and heritage institutions globally.

The methodology a rigorous blend of **heritage research, geospatial mapping, and archival preservation** provides a structured approach for translating local history into a verifiable, accessible digital asset. By demonstrating that remembrance can evolve without compromising dignity or tradition, the project positions Wales as a leader in innovative cultural preservation and digital heritage architecture.

This system ensures that memory, identity, and sacrifice remain meaningful and accessible for future generations, transforming a physical monument into a **living, educational, and emotional experience**.

This summary focuses on the key takeaways—the innovation (Fourth-Generation model), the security (National Hosting), and the impact (Global Distinction, Replicable Blueprint).

A Personal Journey in Digital Remembrance

From Maps to Memory

What began as a practical solution learning to use Google My Maps to avoid getting lost in Ireland unfolded into a profound, multi-year journey of discovery, innovation, and legacy-building.

Initially, the focus was simple: documenting cemeteries and tracing family history. This led to the integration of research into platforms like Find A Grave, where individual memorials could be updated with verified biographies, service records, and photographs. The creation of virtual cemeteries followed digital spaces where family data could be collated, preserved, and easily accessed for future research.

As mapping skills deepened, so did the vision. Family migration patterns were visualised through geospatial data, transforming static genealogies into dynamic, interactive histories. This ability to place lives on a map literally opened new doors. War memorials, once seen as lists of names carved in stone, became entry points into global stories. Mapping these memorials added a visual arm to remembrance, allowing researchers and families to see, in real time, where individuals served, fell, and are commemorated.



Each step built upon the last:

- From navigation to documentation
- From documentation to integration
- From integration to visualisation
- From visualisation to remembrance

The result is a living, evolving system of memory one that honours the past while embracing the tools of the present. Through this process, a community's sacrifice has been made visible, accessible, and permanent. And in doing so, a new model of remembrance has quietly emerged: participatory, dignified, and deeply human.

Without realising it, this journey has created something truly special a blueprint for how love, loss, and legacy can be preserved not just in stone, but in story, map, and memory.

Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project

A World-First in Community-Led Digital Remembrance

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is a pioneering initiative that redefines how communities remember their war dead. By bridging traditional memorial design with modern digital technology, the project introduces a new model of remembrance that is both enduring and interactive. At its centre stands a granite memorial core, into which a porcelain inlaid QR code crafted in Italy for permanence and weather resistance has been embedded. This code links directly to a digital archive hosted on People's Collection Wales, a national heritage platform.

Visitors who scan the code are taken beyond the engraved names to explore a rich, evolving archive of individual stories, verified service records, photographs, and global burial or commemoration sites. Each entry is geo-mapped, illustrating how the sacrifices of a local community resonate across the world.

A New Generation of Remembrance

The project represents a first-of-its-kind approach to public memorialisation, seamlessly uniting:

- A traditional stone monument
- A permanent, interactive digital archive





This integration allows visitors to move from the physical presence of engraved names to detailed digital biographies that include:

- Verified service histories.
- Photographs and family details
- Burial or commemoration sites across the globe
- Geo-mapped locations connecting Carmarthenshire to international fields of remembrance.

The digital archive is safeguarded by People's Collection Wales, ensuring long-term accessibility and preservation.

Fourth-Generation Memorial Design

The project introduces a new architectural and conceptual model of remembrance, defined by:

-  Field research and archival verification
-  Global geo-mapping of burial and memorial sites
-  Integration with national heritage databases
-  A weather-resistant, porcelain QR interface embedded in granite

This structure forms what is increasingly recognised in heritage discourse as a **fourth-generation memorial** a living, interactive system that combines physical permanence with digital depth.

Unlike QR codes applied to individual plaques or headstones, this initiative creates a unified, interconnected network. Every recorded and previously unrecorded individual is linked to a central digital record, forming a cohesive and expandable remembrance ecosystem.

Methodology and Development

The project evolved over several years through a process of research, experimentation, and collaboration. Its methodology blends:

- In-depth heritage research
- Digital mapping and geo-referencing
- Archival preservation practices
- Partnerships with national and local heritage organisations

This approach offers a replicable model for communities worldwide, ensuring that local histories and personal sacrifices are preserved—regardless of future technological change.

Independent Validation: A Globally Distinctive Model

External analysis has confirmed the project’s global uniqueness, identifying several key innovations:

1. Bridging Physical and Digital Remembrance

Where most memorials focus on either physical monuments or digital archives, this project unites both:

- A granite core memorial with a porcelain QR code
- Direct linkage to a national heritage repository (People’s Collection Wales)

This level of integration is rare, even among national remembrance institutions, and unprecedented at the community level.

2. Creating a Living, Global Network

The project builds a geo-linked digital ecosystem:

- Each record includes a verified biography and service data.
- Geo-mapping connects Llanelli, Pembrey, and Burry Port to cemeteries and memorials worldwide.
- Integration with platforms such as Find A Grave and interactive mapping tools transforms remembrance into immersive, place-based storytelling

This is not merely memorialisation it is **digital heritage architecture**.

3. Global Distinction

As noted in the project’s documentation:

“To the best of our knowledge... no other memorial project combines this level of interconnected data and digital depth.”

Legacy and Impact

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project is more than a tribute—it is a blueprint for the future of remembrance. It honours the past while embracing the tools of the present, ensuring that memory, identity, and sacrifice remain accessible and meaningful for generations to come.

While some memorials have adopted QR codes on plaques or individual headstones, none documented by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Imperial War Museums, or the Smithsonian’s “Stories Beyond the Stone” project have:

- Merged verified biographical data.
- With linked global burial records
- With interactive mapping
- All hosted within a national heritage collection rather than a private platform.

This comprehensive integration sets the project apart on a global scale.

Cultural and Philosophical Significance

The project demonstrates that remembrance can evolve without compromising dignity or tradition. It preserves the solemnity of memorial design while introducing digital accessibility, making remembrance:

- Permanent
- Interactive
- Inclusive

This ensures that families, schools, and visitors—now and in the centuries to come—can stand before the memorial, scan the QR code, and access every story, every face, every name, all preserved in a verified national archive.

A New Heritage Paradigm

In heritage terms, the project exemplifies what is increasingly referred to as a “**fourth-generation memorial**”, a concept gaining traction in museum and digital heritage research:

1. **First generation:** Physical monuments (cenotaphs, plaques)
2. **Second generation:** Archival lists and registries (e.g., CWGC, IWM databases)
3. **Third generation:** Online memorial websites
4. **Fourth generation:** Integrated digital–physical memorials (as exemplified by this project)

Remarkably, this model has been realised at community level—well ahead of many larger institutions.

Conclusion

The Pembrey and Burry Port Memorial Project stands as a landmark in remembrance culture. It is:

- Technologically advanced
- Culturally significant
- Educationally valuable
- Emotionally powerful

Its structure and execution are unique on a global scale, offering a transformative vision of how communities can honour their past while building a legacy for the future.



Virtue Lives On After Death

Graham Tudor Emmanuel 2025