

Violet, Lady Merthyr, Pembrokeshire (1908-2003)

It was fitting that Lady Merthyr was a County Commissioner and Patron of Girlguiding Pembrokeshire, the county renowned for its coastal National Park. She had an inherent love of the sea and had sailed around the seas and rivers of Europe. Visiting Broneirion on numerous occasions she always insisted on taking the scenic, least direct, coastal route home. She kept a personal notebook of prayers predominantly relating to her love of nature, in particular the sea.

Her home in the county was Hean Castle, which overlooked Saundersfoot Bay. It was here she welcomed Guides to camp in the grounds and in 1939, with her husband, hosted H.R.H. The Princess Royal on her visit to the county.

She was fundamental in developing early Guiding in the county, having persuaded her mother, Lady Meyrick to become a Commissioner, opening several units and training new Guiders. At one point she organised a meeting for girls to find out about Guiding, to which over 200 turned up!

In 1931 she represented Wales at an international camp in Finland and at the 1935 Girl Guide Conference she chaired a special session for Commissioners and young Guiders. Also in 1935 she trekked with her Sea Ranger unit, taking essential equipment on a pony and cart, the former of which she references in her report.

"We rose early the next day, and after breakfast we used a great deal of our energy endeavouring to catch our pony, that was turned out in an adjoining field."

She assisted in the war effort, raising funds to buy a lifeboat, ambulances and air ambulances.

In 1945 she held the office of Commissioner for Rangers (I.H.Q.), giving up the role when Lord Merthyr returned, having been released from a prisoner-of-war camp. In that short time she inspired a new Ranger syllabus called "Plotting the Course" which replaced the wartime "Home Emergency Service". She also helped design a new Ranger uniform and from her original idea came the "Empire Ranger Week" in 1948. She returned to the role in 1949 when her predecessor wrote -

"Knowing her inspiring powers of personal leadership and her great capacity for constructive action, we welcome her back wholeheartedly." (M.E.R. Sutherland)

Lady Merthyr was awarded the Silver Fish, the highest award given to active adult members of Girlguiding, in recognition of her distinguished service. She gave 80 years of service to Girlguiding.

As County Patron she attended AGMs to present awards and when, in later years, was no longer able to attend, looked forward to receiving a copy of the county report to keep her updated on events. She reminded everyone regularly that grass roots Guiders were the important ones who kept Guiding going.

In Lady Merthyr's own words -

"I would say to all you, who are Guides or potential Guiders ... there is no better way than Guiding in which to serve your neighbourhood, your county or to serve the world and at the same time to have enormous fun and fellowship"

Violet, Boneddiges Merthyr, Sir Benfro (1906-2003)

Yr oedd yn briodol bod y Foneddige Merthyr yn Gomisiynydd Sir a Noddwraig Girlguiding Sir Benfro, sir sy'n enwog am ei Barc Cenedlaethol arfordirol. Roedd ganddi gariad cynhenid tuag at y môr ac wedi hwylio o amgylch moroedd ac afonydd Ewrop. Wrth ymweld â Broneirion ar lawer achlysur mynnodd cymryd y llwybr arfordirol mwyaf golygus, lleiaf uniongyrchol, adref. Cadwodd nodiadur personol o weddïau yn ymwneud â'i hoffter o natur, yn arbennig y môr.

Castell Hean yn y sir oedd ei chartref, sydd yn edrych dros Fae Llanussyllt. Yma croesawodd Guides i wersylla ar y tir ac yn 1939, gyda'i gŵr, cynhaliodd Ei Huchelder y Dywysoges Frenhinol ar ei hymweliad â'r sir.

Roedd hi'n hanfodol i ddatblygiadau Guiding gynnar yn y sir, ar ôl berswadio ei mam, y Foneddige Meyrick i fod yn Gomisiynydd. Agorodd nifer o unedau a hyfforddi Guiders newydd. Mewn un achos pan drefnodd cyfarfod i ferched gael gwybod am Guiding, wnaeth dros 200 troi i fyny!

Yn 1931 wnaeth cynrychioli Cymru mewn gwerysll rhyngwladol yn y Ffindir ac yn Gynhadledd y Guides 1935, lle cadeiriodd sesiwn arbennig i Gomisiynwyr a Guiders ifanc. Hefyd yn 1935 aeth ar hirdaith gyda'i uned Sea Rangers, gan gymryd offer hanfodol ar ferlen a chert, y mae hi'n cyfeirio at y ferlen yn ei hadroddiad.

"We rose early the next day, and after breakfast we used a great deal of our energy endeavouring to catch our pony, that was turned out in an adjoining field."

Cynorthwyodd yn ymdrechion y rhyfel, gan godi arian i brynu bad achub, ambiwlansys ac ambiwlansys awyr.

Ym 1945 dalier swydd Gomisiynydd Rangers (I.H.Q.), gorffenodd y rôl pan ddychwelodd y Bonheddig Merthyr, ar ôl ei ryddhau o wersyll carcharorion ryfel. Yn yr amser byr hynny, ysbrydolodd faes llafur newydd i'r Rangers o'r enw "Plotting The Course" a ddisodlodd y "Home Emergency Service" o gyfnod y rhyfel. Wnaeth helpu i ddylunio'r wisg Ranger newydd, ac o ganlyniad i'w syniad gwreiddiol daeth Wythnos Ceidwad Ymerodraeth "Empire Ranger Week" yn 1948. Dychwelodd i'r rôl yn 1949 pan ysgrifennodd ei rhagflaenydd -

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Derbyniodd gwobr y Pysgodyn Arian (Silver Fish), gwobr uchaf Girl Guiding UK, i gydnabod ei gwasanaeth neilltuol. Rhoddodd 80 mlynedd o wasanaeth i Girlguiding.

Fel Noddwraig Sir mynychodd Cyfarfodydd Cyffredinol Blynyddol i gyflwyno gwobrau, ac mewn blynyddoedd diweddarach, pan na fedrai bod yn bresennol, edrychodd ymlaen at dderbyn copi o'r adroddiad sir i ddarllen am y digwyddiadau diweddaraf. Atgoffodd pawb yn rheolaidd taw'r Guiders a oedd yn gweithio ar lefel sylfaen oedd y rhai pwysig a gadwodd Guiding i fynd.

Mewn geiriau Boneddige Merthyr ei hun -

"I would say to all you, who are Guides or potential Guiders ... there is no better way than Guiding in which to serve your neighbourhood, your county or to serve the world and at the same time to have enormous fun and fellowship"