

9. Notable People

Jasper Tudor

Jasper Tudor was the uncle of the future Henry VII / Henry Tudor. In The 1460s it is believed that Gruffydd Fychan of Cors y Gedol, a Lancastrian supporter during the War of the Roses, built Tŷ Gwyn (The site of the Bronze Bell Wreck Museum) as a safe house for Jasper Tudor to secretly rendezvous with other supporters in Gwynedd, while also affording a means of escape to the sea if it was needed. It seems Barmouth played a part in the plots and plans of Kings and War.

The Romantics:

Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley visited Barmouth in 1812 with his wife Mary.

Lord Byron

Lord Byron is also known to have stayed in Barmouth.

William Wordsworth



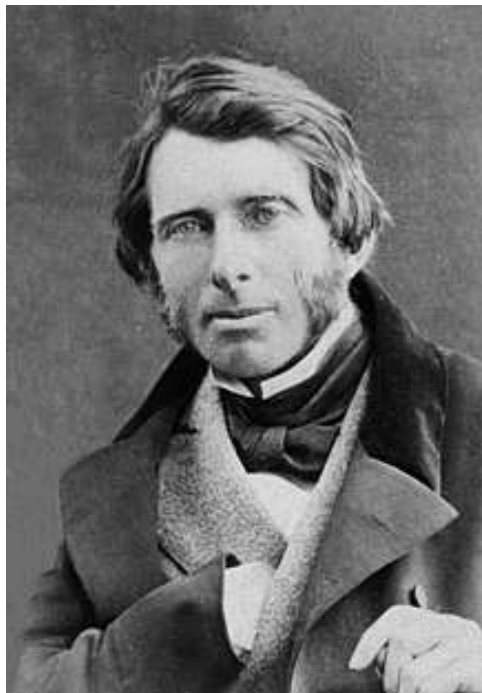
Wordsworth, while visiting, wrote *“With a fine sea view in front, the mountains behind, the glorious estuary running eight miles inland, and Cadair Idris within compass of a day’s walk, Barmouth can always hold its own against any rival”*. He stayed in Barmouth in 1824.

Alfred Lord Tennyson



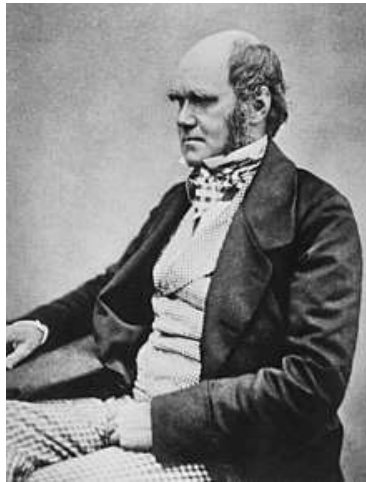
The Poet Laureate wrote part of *In Memoriam* in Barmouth during 1839 and it is believed that *Crossing the Bar* is inspired by the mouth of the Mawddach.

Ruskin



John Ruskin wrote *“There is no better walk than from Barmouth to Dolgellau other than from Dolgellau to Barmouth”*. John Ruskin stayed in Barmouth and there are a row of cottages on the rock known as Ruskin’s Cottages. In 1874 they were given to him and his Guild of St. George by Fanny Talbot for a consideration of £1,000. They were to be used as part of Ruskin’s social experiment to house the poor and prevent the ferment of revolution.

Darwin



Charles Darwin stayed a few days in Barmouth in 1831, while travelling through North Wales collecting Flora and Fauna and studying the local geology. Darwin and his family also stayed at Caerleon, just outside Barmouth, in 1869. He spent several weeks here revising the fifth edition of *On The Origin Of Species*. This was his last visit to Barmouth.

Fanny Talbot



Fanny Talbot was born in Bridgwater, Somerset in 1824. Fanny married George Tertius Talbot, a surgeon and they lived mainly in Bridgwater until his death in 1873. Fanny then used part of her inheritance to buy Tŷ'n y Ffynnon along with some land and a few cottages on the slopes of Barmouth. Fanny Talbot donated some cottages to the poet John Ruskin for his social experiment. They soon became friends and corresponded regularly. She also gave one of the cottages to August Guyard. In 1895 the Cannon Harwicke Rawnsley, one of the founding members of the National Trust, visited Fanny at Tŷ'n y Ffynnon and Fanny suggested that she might donate an area of land known as Dinas Oleu (The Fortress of Light) to the trust. A few months later she did just that, donating four acres and this became the first piece of land ever donated to the National Trust.

Auguste Guyard



Auguste Guyard was a Frenchman who lived in Barmouth. His friends included Victor Hugo who wrote *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Alexander Dumas who wrote *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count Of Monte Cristo* as well as Lamartine, a famous poet in France. While in France Auguste wrote a piece in his local paper about the rights of the worker which was against the period of King Louis Philippe and for which he was sent to prison. After his release he became editor of *Le Bien Public* a newspaper owned by Lamartine, which was influential in dethroning Louis and bringing the revolution of 1848. Guyard gave up politics after this and moved to a small village called Frotey. His plan was to make Frotey a utopia and a pattern for all villages in France, similar to Ruskin's social experiment. He was awarded a gold medal for his endeavours by Napoleon III and Napoleons son awarded him a silver one. However the parish priest accused him of flouting the magisterium of the church and so he fled to Paris. War had broken out and Paris became besieged so Auguste fled Paris for the safety of Wales. So how did he end up in Barmouth? Fanny Talbots' son had gone to Paris to study art where he met and married Auguste Guyard's daughter. After she died he married her sister. When Auguste fled Paris Fanny Talbot gave him a cottage on the rock in Barmouth. He lived there until his death. He created the terraced gardens that can be seen there and when he died he was buried above the town as were his wishes. His grave can still be visited today and is known locally as *The Frenchman's Grave*.



W.W.Greener was a famous gun maker from Birmingham. Rumour has it that in the 1890s he was travelling on holiday with his wife when the wheel of their carriage fell off. Mr Greener went to find a wheelwright in Barmouth and left his wife to wait on a rock. While she sat there she watched the sunset. Upon Mr Greener's return his wife told him of the beauty of the sunset and how she would love to live there. The result was that Mr Greener had the house that is known as Tŷ'r Graig built in 1892, (The yellow castle to locals). Looking down from directly above the building it looks like an open double barrel shotgun!

William Gladstone



William Gladstone 1892 – 4th term

In 1892 the Prime Minister William Gladstone and his wife spent a week on holiday in Barmouth.

Princess Beatrice



In 1889 Princess Beatrice arrived by train in Barmouth to lay the Foundation Stone of St. Johns church. Princess Beatrice was the daughter of Queen Victoria.

Commander Harold Godfrey Lowe RD



On 15th April 1912 fate propelled Harold Lowe in to the most famous maritime disaster ever. Harold Lowe was Fifth Officer of the Titanic when it sank in the Atlantic after striking an iceberg. Harold lived in Barmouth at Penrallt and learnt his boating and sailing skills here. When the disaster occurred he ended up in charge of lifeboat No 14. Initially he was involved in the evacuation of passengers and launching of lifeboats, women and children first. While loading the lifeboats he loaded up to 50 people before lowering to the water. With regard to the number he explained that it depends on the calibre of the man and upon the gear but he would not take more than 50.

At the later enquiry he was asked why he had loaded so many compared to Second Officer Lightoller who loaded far less, to which he stated: *"I am different from another man. I may take on more risk, we will say, than you; or you may take on more risk than me"*. Eventually Fifth Officer Lowe with Second Officer Lightoller and Chief Officer Wilde began loading lifeboat No. 14. Lightoller left and Wilde gave orders along the deck which left Lowe in charge and he put 58 in, he acknowledged that he had overloaded it at the enquiry but said he knew he had to take a certain amount of risk.

Five Lifeboats had been launched without Officers and Lowe and Sixth Officer Moody decided an Officer should take lifeboat 14. Moody told Lowe to go and he would get another boat, he never did. Lifeboat No. 14 had only women and children, apart from one man who he took for rowing. Lowe also discovered an Italian man, at the last moment, dressed as a woman with a shawl over his head. As the boat was being lowered past the open decks a crowd of Italians rushed forward and fearing they might try and jump in to the boat Lowe fired his pistol 3 times. At the enquiry he was asked if he had heard pistol shots to which he replied: *"I heard them, and I fired them."*

Once in the water he gathered 4 other lifeboats and rafted them together so that he could place survivors in them before going back to look for more survivors. He was the only one to do this, as the other lifeboats feared being swamped by casualties. He saved a further 4 lives. For this action he was dubbed The Real Hero of the Titanic. Harold was the only one to raise the sail on his lifeboat and this can be easily identified in the famous photo of the lifeboats approaching the Carpathia as his boat has the mast up. Harold can be seen as the one standing up at the tiller.

After the enquiries and back in Barmouth he was given a heroes reception at the Pavilion and presented with a commemorative gold watch inscribed with: *“Presented to Harold Godfrey Lowe, 5th officer R.M.S. Titanic by his friends in Barmouth and elsewhere in recognition and appreciation of his gallant services at the foundering of the Titanic 15th April 1912”*.

Major Harold William “Bill” Tilman CBE, DSO, MC and BAR



Bill Tilman was born in 1898 and went directly from school at the age of 17 to serve in the Royal Artillery for the duration of the First World War. He was in the trenches as a gunner for over three years. Tilman fought at the battle of the Somme and was twice awarded the Military Cross for bravery. After the war he left the army and sailed to Africa to become a coffee planter where he stayed for 10 years. Whilst there he met Eric Shipton, together they climbed the highest mountains in Africa such as Mount Kenya, Mount Stanley in the Ruwenzori range and Kilimanjaro. Legend has it that when Tilman returned to the U.K., he simply jumped on his bike and cycled from the east coast of Africa to the west coast to catch a boat to sail home.

During the 1930s Tilman became one of the leading explorers in the Himalayan Mountains. He made the first ascent of Nanda Devi and he also made several trips to Everest. At the outbreak of WWII Tilman, although over age, volunteered and served in North Africa and then in Special Operations in Italy and Albania where he parachuted in behind enemy lines to work with the resistance. For his actions there he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and was given the keys to the city of Belluno in Northern Italy which he helped save from occupation and destruction.

After the war he declared that he was too old to be top class for high altitude climbing. Tilman was a talented climber and sailor but first and foremost he was an explorer. So he bought an old Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter named Mischief and started to make long distance sailing expeditions with small scratch crews. He sailed to both the Arctic and Antarctic. His longest voyage lasted for a year and a day.

In the 60s and 70s, when he wasn't sailing, he lived with his sister in Barmouth at Bod Owen near Glandwr and was the president of the Barmouth RNLI. In 1977 he agreed to go on an expedition to the South Atlantic to climb Smith Island, probably for the first time not in command or on his own boat but as crew. The boat made it successfully as far as Rio de Janeiro, but en route to the Falkland Islands in November of that year they disappeared without trace – it was presumed the ship had foundered with all hands.

Prince Edward



In October 1923 Prince Edward (Prince of Wales and the future King who would abdicate) visited the British Legion Branch in our town.



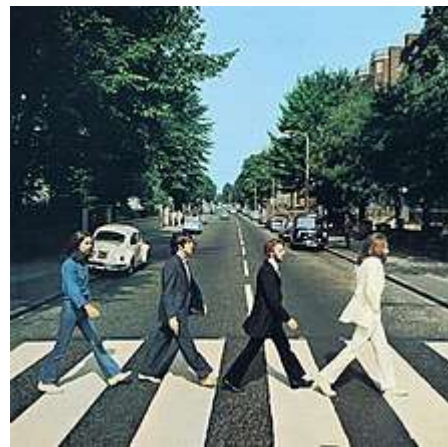
In 1933 Lloyd George and his wife came to open the new sea defences and promenade. While here he addressed a crowd in the town where he famously said: *“If the Powers succeed in overthrowing Nazism in Germany, what would follow? Not a conservative, socialist or liberal regime, but extreme communism. Surely that could not be their objective. A communist Germany would be infinitely more formidable than a communist Russia.”*

Johnny Williams



If you walk up to the peak you will pass a ruined farm called Cellfechan. This was the birthplace of Johnny Williams who was a professional boxer in the 40s and 50s. When he was a toddler his family moved to Rugby where he grew up. In 1952 he became both the British and Empire Heavyweight Champion.

Tommy Nutter



Tommy Nutter was born in Barmouth in 1943 but was raised in Edgware. He was famous for reinventing the Savile Row suit in the 1960s. He opened up Nutters of Savile Row with the backing of Cilla Black and others. His clients included Mick Jagger, Bianca Jagger and Elton John. He dressed three of the four Beetles for the famous Abbey Road album, with George Harrison deciding to wear denim. He also designed the clothing for the Joker played by Jack Nicholson in the 1989 Batman film.

Princess Diana and Prince Charles



In 1982 Princess Diana named the new Barmouth Lifeboat The Princess of Wales. She was on a tour of Wales with Prince Charles after their marriage and this was one of her first official royal duties.



During the mid 1980s Princess Diana's cousin Roger Spencer was the Catholic Priest at St Tudwal's Catholic Church in Barmouth. Roger Spencer pictured with Sybil Williams.

But that is not the only link with this little town. In 1920, Edward FitzEdmund Burke Roche , 2nd Baron Fermoy, was staying at the guest house Minfor. One morning he suffered a heart attack while eating his breakfast and died. He was buried in Llanaber by 4 workmen and no family attended the burial. He was Princess Diana's Great Uncle.

Princess Anne



In 1987 Princess Anne visited Barmouth to meet Save The Children volunteers.