



Awdur Elizabeth Jane Corbett: Ffeindio Fy Ffordd Adref / Finding My Way Home

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Mae Elizabeth Jane Corbett yn dod o Awstralia sydd wedi cwympo mewn cariad gyda'r iaith, chwedlau a throedd o Gymru. Ar ôl hala amser dysgu'r iaith ym Melbourne, gartref gyda [Say Something In Welsh](#) ac wedyn yng Nghymru, cyhoeddodd hi ei nofel cyntaf [The Tides Between](#) yn hydref 2017. Yma, mae hi'n esbonio am ei thaith a sut gwnaeth hi ddyylanwadu ei bywyd ac ysgrifennu...

Elizabeth Jane Corbett is a Australian who fell in love with the language, myths and lands of Wales. After spending time learning the language in Melbourne, at home with [Say Something in Welsh](#) and then in Wales, she released her debut novel [The Tides Between](#) in autumn 2017. Here, she explains about her journey and how this has influenced her life and writing...

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Beth yw'r ots gennyf i am Gymru?
Damwain a hap
Yw fy mod yn ei libart yn byw.
- T.H. Parry-Williams

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What do I care about Wales?
An accident of birth finds me living in her
Little backyard.

Do'n i ddim yn bwriadu dysgu Cymraeg. Fe wnaeth ddigwydd drwy broses damwain a hap. Pan droais i'n bedwar deg oed, a chael crisis canol bywyd, penderfynnais fy mod i moyn trio ysgrifennu nofel. Dw i erioed wedi ysgrifennu nofel o'r blaen. Ond ro'n i wrth fy modd astudio hanes. Symudais i Awstralia yn fy mhlentyndod. Felly, penderfynnais i drio ysgrifennu nofel mewnfudo Awstraliaidd. Caeth fy Nhad ei eni yn Lloegr

I never intended to learn Welsh. It happened through a process of *damwain a hap*. I'd turned forty, had a mid-life crisis and decided I'd always wanted to write a novel. I'd never written a novel before, mind. But I loved history and moving to Australia had been the defining event of my childhood. So why not make it an Aussie immigration novel? Dad was born in England but Mum

ond Cymraes oedd fy Mam. Felly, ar fympwy, penderfynais i gynnwys cwpl o gymeriadau Cymreig yn y stori. Wrth edrych yn ôl, dw i'n synnu pa mor achlysurol roedd y penderfyniad.

Er hynny, mae ef wedi newid fy mywyd yn gyfan gwbl.

Do'n i ddim yn gwybod llawer am Gymru ar y pryd- dim ond hanes y diwydiant glo (daeth fy Mam o'r De) a bod pobl Cymru yn hoffi rygbi a chôr meibion. Hefyd, ro'n i'n gwybod am yr iaith Gymraeg. Ro'n i eisaiau i fy nghwpl Cymreig roi ysbrydoliaeth i fy mhrif gymeriad, glaslances bymtheg oed. Ond do'n i ddim yn meddwl byddai'n ffeindio glowyr neu rygbi yn ysbrydoliaeth iawn- hefyd gwnaeth rugby ddim yn bodoli yn 1841! Ar ôl tipyn bach o waith ymchwil sylweddolais fod gan Gymru hanes barddonol hefyd. Darllenais i'r Mabinogi a llawer o chwedlau Cymreig. Fe dyfodd y cwpl o Gymry yn storïwyr. Wnes i ddod ar draws gwybodaeth am ddosbarthiadau Cymraeg ym Melbourne hefyd. Ro'n i'n meddwl: effalai fydd hi'n ddefnyddiol i ddysgu tipyn bach am yr iaith. Wnes i gofrestu yn y dosbarth am un tymor!

Roedd gennyf bedwar o blant a oedd yn byw yn fy nghartref yn y dyddiau 'na. Mae'n rhaid i fi gydnabod, oedd y gallu i ddweud, "I'm going to Welsh class", a cherdded mas y drws bob nos Fawrth yn rhan o'r apêl. Ond hefyd, wnes i ffeindio'r geiriau Cymraeg mor brydferth. Trodd un tymor o ddosbarthiadau i mewn i ddua dymor ac wedyn tri. Cyn i fi wybod, roeddwn wedi syrthio mewn cariad gyda'r iaith Gymraeg.

Do'n i erioed wedi disgwl siarad yr iaith. Ro'n i wedi astudio Siapaneg yn yr ysgol a ro'n i'n anobeithiol yn llwyr. Ces i ddim dawn am ieithoedd. Ond roedd ysgrifennu nofel gyda chymeriadau Cymraeg wedi dihuno darnau cudd ynof, darnau do'n i ddim wedi sylweddoli eu bod yn bodoli.

Ar ôl gorffen braslun cyntaf fy nofel, ro'n i'n lwcus i gael fy enwi ar restr fer am wobr datblygu llawysgrif. Hefyd, enillais y Bristol Short Story Prize gyda stori am blentyndod fy Mam. Wedyn - trychineb. Dechreuodd ein merch ieuengaf ni weithio ei ffordd trwy restr o hunllefau gwaethaf pob rhiant. Wnaeth hi redeg bant a byw ar y strydoedd, brifo ei hunan, cwympo mas o'r ysgol a siop ladrata. Roedd ei hymddygiad yn cael effaith ofnadwy ar fy iechyd meddwl. Allwn i ddim ysgrifennu. Allwn i ddim gweithio. Mynnodd fy ngŵr fod rhaid i fi fynd ar wyliau am dipyn. Roedd gennym lawer o bwyntiau *Frequent Flyers*- penderfynon ni i deithio i Gymru - gwlaid yr iaith a'r straeon.

Er mwyn paratoi ar gyfer fy ngwyliau, awgrymodd ffrind dylwn i drio cwrs [Say Something in Welsh](#). Roedd y syniad o drio cwrs ar-lein rhyfedd yn llenwi fi yn llawn gofid. Ond penderfynais i drio un wers. Mae Aran - y dyn ar y podlediad - mor garedig. Dwedodd e wrth bawb ein bod yn gwneud yn dda iawn ac y byddwn yn cael llywyddiant. Bydd popeth yn iawn. Roedd ei eiriau fel glaw ar ddaear sych. Wnes i wers bob dydd, weithiau dwywaith y dydd. Cwmpodd pum mlynedd o ddosbarthiadau i'w lle - fel ceiniogau yn syrthio, syrthio, syrthio. Nawr, dweda i wrth bawb - gerddais i drwy'r amser tywyll yn gafael ar gwt yr hen iaith.

Es i i [Gwrs Haf](#) yn Aberystwyth y flwyddyn wedyn. Pan ro'n i yno, cwrddais i â Veronica Calarco, arlunydd o Awstralia a oedd yn byw yng Nghymru. Pan wnaeth hi sefydlu [Stiwdio Maelor](#) yng Nghorris (stiwdio breswyl ar gyfer ysgrifennwyr ac arlunwyr) ceisiais i am le fel y gwirfoddolwr cyntaf.

Gwnes i well fy Nghymraeg trwy arhos saith mis yn Stiwdio Maelor. Wnes i ymuno â grŵp Merched y Wawr a chofrestru mewn dosbarthiadau Cymreig er mwyn gwella fy Nghymraeg. Gorffennais i fy nofel pan ro'n i'n byw yno hefyd. Mae hi'n nofel "coming-of-age" hanesyddol wedi ei gosod ar long allfiad. Mae storïwyr Australaidd yn dweud eu chwedlau Cymreig yn ystod y daith. Nofel ychydig yn hudol a rhyfedd i ddweud y gwir, a do'n i ddim yn siŵr os byddai unrhyw un yn moyn ei chyhoeddi hi.

was Welsh. Almost as an afterthought, I decided to throw a Welsh couple into my fictional mix of migrants. Looking back, I am struck by how casually the decision was made. Yet, it has changed my life in so many ways.

I knew nothing about Wales at the time- only the history of the coal industry (my Mum came from the south) and that Welsh people like rugby and male voice choirs. So, I knew about the Welsh language. I wanted my Welsh couple to give inspiration to my main character, a teenager of 15 years old. But I didn't think that she would find miners or rugby to be very inspiring- and rugby wasn't invented in 1841! Some quick research told me Wales also had a strong bardic tradition. I read the Mabinogion and a host of Welsh fairy tales. My Welsh couple became storytellers. I also learned about the weekly Welsh classes in Melbourne. I thought: maybe it will be useful to learn a little about the language. I enrolled for a one term!

I had four children living at home in those days. I must admit being able to say, "I'm off to my Welsh class", and walk out the door every Tuesday evening was part of the appeal. But I also found Welsh words strangely enticing. One term of classes turned into two, then three. Before I knew it, I had fallen in love with the Welsh language.

I didn't ever expect to speak the language. I'd done Japanese at school and never progressed beyond the basics. I was completely hopeless- one of those people that didn't have a flair for languages. But writing a novel with Welsh characters and learning the language were awakening a hidden part of me that I hadn't known existed.

I finished the first draft of my novel and got shortlisted for a manuscript development award. I also won a short story prize- Bristol Short Story Prize with a story about my Mum's childhood. Then disaster struck. Our youngest daughter began to work her way through a list of every parent's worst fears. She ran away to live on the streets, self-harmed, dropped out of school and shoplifted. This had a terrible effect on my mental health. I couldn't write. I could barely function. My husband insisted I take a break. We had loads of frequent flyers points- why not travel to the land of words and stories?

In preparation for my holiday, a friend recommended I try [Say Something in Welsh](#). I felt so fragile at the time. The idea of doing a strange online language course terrified me. But I decided to try one lesson. Aran, the man on the podcast, was so encouraging. He told me I was doing a great job and I could succeed. Everything will be all right. His words were like rain on parched earth. I did a lesson every day, after that, sometimes twice a day. Five years of language learning fell into place- like pennies falling, falling, falling. Now, I tell people- I walked through a dark time by holding the old language's tail.

I did [Cwrs Haf](#) in Aberystwyth the following year. Whilst there I met Veronica Calarco, an Aussie artist living in Wales. When she set up [Stiwdio Maelor](#), a residency program for artists and writers, I became her first long-term volunteer.

I improved my Welsh during the seven months I spent living in Stiwdio Maelor. I joined Medrched y Wawr and registered for Welsh classes to improve my Welsh. I finished my novel while living there as well. It's a historical 'coming of age' novel, set on an emigration vessel. The Australia-bound storytellers recount Welsh legends in the course of the voyage. To tell the truth, it's a novel that's a little magical, a little strange, and I wasn't sure if

anyone would want to publish it.

Ond yn yr eiliad, yn eistedd gyda'r mynyddoedd Eryri o gwmpas fi, doedd cyhoeddi ddim yn bwysig, achos trwy'r broses greadigol, ro'n i wedi ffeindio fy ffordd adref.

But then, sitting with Snowdonia's mountains around me, I realised that publishing wasn't important, because through the process of its creation, I have found my way home.

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Yn eistedd gyda'r mynyddoedd Eryri o gwmpas fi, doedd cyhoeddi ddim yn bwysig, achos trwy'r broses greadigol, ro'n i wedi ffeindio fy ffordd adref.