

**Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Tyddewi a Phebidiog  
St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society**

**The Bug Farm – Then and Now  
Sarah Beynon**

When you are young you have little interest in your own history, it is only when a major event triggers something that you begin to explore the generations that went before – and contribute to who you are and where your passions came from. That is the case with the Beynons and Haflodd Uchaf. The farm name appears to refer to a ditch or boundary, but although ancient flints have been found there are no signs of early structures. Gran Dorothy had to be the bread-winner on the family farm after her father's death and only later in life was able to return to education, eventually training to become a teacher and it was she who inspired the young Sarah to be interested in everything around her.

The 1840's Tithe Map shows Haflodd Uchaf occupied by a Mrs Beynon and by the 1880s the farm passed from John Beynon to his son John, who bought the farm in 1914, but as with families with more than one son rather than divide up the original farm the younger son would either buy or rent another farm nearby – in this case Penlan (rented from the church). John Jnr. Then sold Haflodd to his brother Stanley (1957). Sarah was born and brought up in the farmhouse of Penlan – renown as the home of the Ty Dewi herd of Welsh Black cattle, bred by Sarah's father John, before she the moved back to the



original family farm at Haflodd Uchaf.

Haflodd changed over the centuries as large families were born and brought up there and the changes are recorded in the many family photos but the farm had to wait for 20 years, with no one living on the site, for its new lease of life. No sooner had they started work than in the storms of February 2013 all the roofs blew off and walls fell down so a major restoration project was embarked on, to try to

recreate the character of the farm buildings as close to the originals as possible – complete with slit windows and pigeon roosts – whilst creating new homes for creatures (bird boxes, bee hotels, bat boxes). All the changes were tackled on a very limited budget but the result is officially registered as a zoo (covered by the same regulations as if they kept lions as 'bugs' are not recognised under their own specific category!)

The Bug Farm provides an opportunity to link Sarah's love of farming with a love of insects in a way that recognises that it is possible to tell how healthy, and sustainable, the farmed environment is through a study of the insects. As an active part of the nutrient cycle the humble dung beetle is capable of saving farmers hundreds of thousands of pounds each year ... by breaking down dung and releasing the nutrients, removing the dung and reducing methane production, controlling other pests and diseases and aiding biodiversity – and all for free!



Glastir agricultural schemes promote the need to look after dung beetles and this is put into practice on the farm with 100 acres, plus 40 acres of St Davids Airfield, put to conservation grazing, building up the Ty Dewi herd of Welsh Blacks once again. The cattle grazing the heathland areas, plus hay from species-rich meadows increases the value of the cattle whilst the cattle in turn help promote biodiversity. The result is species-rich grasslands forming Green Corridors for wildlife, linking the Dowrog Commons with the Airfield Heath. The farm is also put to growing low-input varieties of heritage wheat along with creating different types of land-use to aid research in collaboration with universities and other environmental groups – on a national and international scale. These have included BBC Spring Watch as well as working the Imperial College London and Harper Adams looking at insect pollinators and the importance of arable field margins in environmental conservation.

As a commercial enterprise it is essential to be able to fund the projects and this is achieved through the Bug Farm's role as a visitor attraction. This not only generates income but more importantly generates interest ... particularly in the next generation ... in a way that helps people appreciate the importance of sustainability. As well as kids events the attraction ranges from school groups, TyF and Celtic Camping to university students, supporting research alongside the visitor attraction ... and of course the Bug Farm Kitchen encourages people to think about the efficiency of insects as a source of protein (appreciated by thousands around the world!). There are plans for a Museum of Farming to bring the history of the farm alive to draw together the past and the future.