

## BARMOUTH (*In Pictures*)



(*Left*) Mrs Fanny Talbot (1824-1917), Guild donor and Companion. A landowner and philanthropist, she not only donated thirteen cottages in Barmouth to the Guild, but is credited as the first donor to the National Trust, with the gift in 1895 of four and a half acres of land, Dinas Oleu ('Fortress of Light') in the same west-coast Welsh town. Growing up in Bridgwater, Somerset, the daughter of John and Mary Browne, she married George Tertius Talbot and later moved to Barmouth. He died in 1873. The couple had one son, George Quartus ('Quarry') Talbot.



(*Right*) The gravestone of Fanny Talbot (centre of photo) in neighbouring St Mary's Churchyard, Llanaber, overlooking the sea. One of the many women to support Ruskin's ventures in the Guild of St George, she became a keen correspondent of his. He called her 'a motherly, bright, black-eyed woman ... if you answer one question she'll ask you six.'



(*Left, with plaque above*) Tyn-y-Fynnon today: the totally rebuilt home of Mrs Talbot, high on what the locals call 'The Rock' (of Gibraltar), just above the cottages she donated to the Guild, and just below the National Trust land, Dinas Oleu. Sadly, the original house was destroyed by fire.

Talbot shared the property for some time with another of Ruskin's correspondents Blance Atkinson (1847-1911). The daughter of Jonathan Atkinson, a prosperous Liverpool soap manufacturer, she became a novelist and children's writer. She also edited two works by the Irish feminist and social reformer, Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904).

Talbot's donation to the National Trust was largely the result of her respect for and friendship with its two Ruskinian co-founders, Canon Rawnsley and Octavia Hill.

One of the first residents of Talbot's St George's Cottages was August Guyard (1808-1883), the French political activist and participant in the 1848 revolution, who counted both Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo among his friends. A 'back-to-nature' community experiment in Frotey-les-Vesouls having fallen foul of the Church authorities, he moved to Paris and eventually fled Prussian invaders in 1870 to move to Barmouth, the home of his daughter, the wife of Mrs Talbot's son, Quartus.



(Right) The view of the 'The Rock' from the coast. Tyn-y-Ffynon can be seen at the highest point, with the cottages that once belonged to the Guild nestling below. They were sold in 1972, by which time there were eight cottages, some of them having been knocked together to expand them from one-up, one-down properties.



(Below) Still called St George's Cottages, these houses are now used largely as holiday homes. The hillside is traversed by a series of steep slopes and steps.

*Pictures and Text: Stuart Eagles*



(Above) St George's Terrace, Barmouth.

(Right) The view across the rock, over the bay.

(Below) This picture appears on a public information board in Barmouth, explaining briefly the history of Mrs Talbot's philanthropic endeavours and her relationship to the town.

All these photographs were taken on a superbly sunny late summer's day in September 2012. One local resident, high on 'The Rock' near Tyn-y-Ffynon, spoke with enthusiasm about Mrs Talbot, Auguste Guyard and the Guild, and proudly showed me some of the work he has exhibited as a sculptor.

