

Suicide 'should never be taboo'

LIZ Saville Roberts MP has backed a suicide prevention charity, saying that the subject should never be taboo.

Figures released by suicide prevention charity Grassroots reveal 400 people will attempt suicide in the UK on any given day.

Dwyfor Meirionnydd MP, Mrs Saville Roberts, has lent her backing to the Ask Now Save Lives campaign, which encourages people to talk openly and honestly about suicide. She also called for more to be done to reach out to people at risk of suicide in isolated communities.

She said: "The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions have made it much more difficult for people to connect with each other, but it has been particularly hard for those already struggling with their mental health."

"The fact that we lose more young people to suicide than any other cause of death is truly heartbreaking. The causes may be complex, but no death by suicide should be seen as inevitable, and early support is crucial to help save lives."

"We know that men are much more likely to commit suicide than women, and there are particular concerns about access to support for those in isolated, rural communities who may feel less able to open up about mental health problems."

"We must move away from treating suicide as a taboo subject and do all we can to encourage people to express their feelings candidly without fear of being judged."

"If you are struggling then don't struggle alone."

Swimmers 'frustrated' by lockdown restrictions

MEMBERS of a swimming group in Criccieth have spoken of their disappointment at not being able to meet for months due to coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

The Woolly Hatters, which formed in March 2019, is an outdoor swim group which, in normal times, meets for regular swims on Criccieth beach and at lakes in Snowdonia.

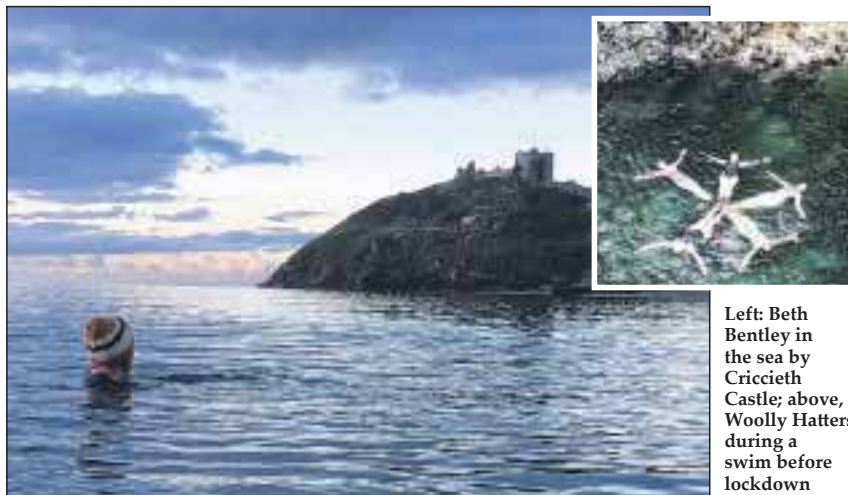
For New Year's Day 2020, the group raised £240 in Criccieth for Ynys Môn & Gwynedd MIND.

Tara Leanne Hall, who has been part of the group since the beginning, said: "Last year's New Year fundraiser was a brilliant time, it's a shame it could not happen again this year."

"We made the decision during the first lockdown to temporarily stop the big group meet ups of the Woolly Hatters, for obvious health and safety reasons."

"We decided to not start them back up when we were allowed to (with social distancing) as this would limit the number of people able to join as well as possibly make the residents of Criccieth quite uncomfortable seeing a crowd of people on the beach to add to the other crowds flocking to the area after restrictions were lifted. We hope to start up as soon as we can as we are all missing the comradery of swimming together."

Debbie Jepson is another original member of the group. She has been left frustrated by being



Left: Beth Bentley in the sea by Criccieth Castle; above, Woolly Hatters during a swim before lockdown

unable to swim outside, saying: "We're all finding this lockdown very difficult and miss swimming together. I find it particularly frustrating

that swimming outside is not advised. It's good for mental health, good for the immune system, good for physical health, out in the fresh air."

New Yorker Liz learning Welsh to connect with roots

by Patrick Hollis
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A WOMAN from New York whose great-great-grandad was from Aberdaron is learning Welsh to feel more connected to her roots.

Liz Williams, who now lives in Melbourne, Australia, grew up in Utica, New York, an area settled by many Welsh immigrants.

Her great-great-grandfather immigrated from Wales to America in 1886 as a young man and spent the rest of his life in New York state.

Liz said: "I first visited the house near Aberdaron where my great-great-grandfather lived when I was 11 years old."

"We were not in contact with relatives at the time but a few years later a distant cousin who was doing genealogical research in Wales located my family over the internet and we have been in contact ever since."

"She has shared with me many details of our family history and introduced me to other relatives still residing in Wales."

"My dad also conducted Gymanfa Ganu singing events throughout New York and other nearby states and became well-known in Welsh-American communities for keeping this tradition alive."

Liz, 29, visited Aberdaron in 2012 when studying a semester abroad at Bath University.

She said: "I stayed with my distant relative in North Wales who had done research on my great-great-grandfather's family."

"She took me to look at his house and also to Aberdaron where several of my ancestors



Liz Williams has been learning Welsh to find out more about her heritage

are buried in the St Hywyn's Church cemetery.

"We visited a Welsh-language primary school in Aberdaron, attended an Eisteddfod and a community concert, and interacted with locals and other relatives."

"A few years later I moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which has a very active St David's Society and Welsh language class that has been going for several years."

"There I was able to take in-person classes and learn enough Welsh to have basic conversations prior to attending the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Meifod in 2015."

"In 2018, I left Pittsburgh with my Australian husband to emigrate to his home country and settle in Melbourne. I was delighted to find that

there was a church in Melbourne that still held services twice a month in Welsh, so I attended for several months to refamiliarise myself with the sounds of the language."

"Melbourne went into a strict four-month lockdown in 2020 as a result of coronavirus, so we stopped meeting in person and began an informal conversation group on Zoom with a Welsh tutor."

Liz hopes to return to Gwynedd for the Eisteddfod in the future, adding: "It feels quite special to know the story of one of my ancestors in such depth and now that I have become an immigrant myself, I understand much of what he must have felt in moving to a new country and building a life for himself there."

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