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## Dublin Core

### Title

The First Flight | Yr Hediad Cyntaf

### Subject

Aviation

Hedfan

Fishguard and Goodwick

Abergwaun, Wdig

History of Flight

Hanes Hedfan

### Creator

Derek Webb

### Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

### Date

2023

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### Relation

<https://perma.cc/7P3T-42PU>

**Format**

Curatescape story

**Language**

English

Welsh

**Coverage**

52.01130418225325, -4.997956768716951

## Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

**Lede**

In 1912, the race was on to see who would be the first person to successfully make the crossing between Great Britain and Ireland by aeroplane.

**Lede (Welsh)**

Ym 1912, roedd y ras ymlaen i weld pwy fyddai'r cyntaf i lwyddo i groesi rhwng Prydain Fawr ac Iwerddon mewn awyren.

**Story**

In 1912 'aeroplaning', as it was then known, was in its infancy. Owning an aeroplane was something that only the rich could indulge in. But indulge in it they did. One of these early aeroplane pioneers was Denys Corbett Wilson. An Anglo-Irishman, his mother was from Kilkenny in Ireland and his father was a wealthy barrister.

Not many years after the Wright brothers made the first flight, and only a couple after Louis Bleriot first flew the English Channel, Corbett Wilson bought a Bleriot XI monoplane for the princely sum of £480 – excluding the engine. He kept his new machine at Hendon aerodrome in north London. It was here that he met a fellow flier, Damer Leslie Allen, who challenged Corbett Wilson to a race across the sea to Ireland. Despite neither of them having flown much further than 30 miles at any time, they ambitiously decided to fly across to Ireland, by way of Chester and Holyhead. The pair set off on the afternoon of 17 April.

Allen followed the railway lines north, while Corbett Wilson found himself buffeted by winds which had sprung up. The conditions were worse than expected and caused Wilson's compass to be dislodged and lost. Without a compass, he looked for anywhere he could land and spotted a field below him, which turned out to be a farm near Hereford. Landing without incident, he managed to get a lift to a hotel and the next day went off in search of a new compass, petrol and oil for his plane. At the time aeroplane engines used castor oil as a lubricant. Its advantage was it didn't mix with the petrol. Its disadvantage was that a plane needed nearly as much oil as it did petrol.

For Corbett Wilson, the added problem was that the castor oil he bought in Hereford the next day was the wrong grade and within a few miles of taking off and heading westwards, the engine began to fail. Once more he was forced down but this time he was high above the Black Mountains. Miraculously, he succeeded in finding the only area of flat land for miles around: a field in Colva, Radnorshire.

He must have thought that the race to Ireland was by now well and truly lost. But when his mechanic arrived the next day with the correct grade of oil and petrol, he learned the tragic news about Damer Allen. He had made Chester as arranged and set off again for Holyhead where he was observed flying out to sea – never to be seen again.

This must have been a reality check for Corbett Wilson; had he not already known full well how hazardous was the journey he was attempting. But undaunted, he set off again for what he describes as 'a lovely flight over moor and mountain to the sea' arriving in Goodwick around 7.00am on 21 April. He spent the night at the Great Western Railway's splendid Fishguard Bay Hotel.

The next day, as he left Goodwick at 5.47am, the weather was perfect. But 20 miles from the Irish coast he flew into heavy rain and thick cloud. His engine also began to misfire and his compass began behaving erratically too, so he flew on blind for several miles until, through a break in the clouds, he spotted fields below in Crane, near Enniscorthy, and decided to land.

In the pouring rain, the Bleriot touched down and kept on going until eventually its progress was stopped by a what he describes as 'a good honest Wexford stone faced bank'. But he had arrived and claimed for himself the distinction of being the first person to have flown successfully between the two countries.

### **Story (Welsh)**

Ym 1912 roedd 'awyrblanau', fel roedden nhw'n cael eu galw bryd hynny, yn eu dyddiau cynnar. Rhywbeth i'r cefnog yn unig ymwneud ag ef oedd bod yn berchen ar awyren. Ond fe aethon nhw ati ag arddeliad. Un o arloeswyr cynnar yr awyrennau hyn oedd Denys Corbett Wilson. Eingl-Wyddel oedd hwn, ei fam yn dod o Kilkenny yn Iwerddon a'i dad yn fargyfreithiwr cyfoethog.

Ychydig flynyddoedd ar ôl i'r brodyr Wright hedfan am y tro cyntaf, ac ychydig yn unig ar ôl i Louis Bleriot hedfan dros y Sianel am y tro cyntaf, prynodd Corbett Wilson fonoplan Bleriot XI am y swm anrhydeddus o £480 – heb gynnwys yr injan. Cadwai ei beiriant newydd ym maes awyr Hendon yng ngogledd Llundain. Yno y cyfarfu â chyd-beilot, Damer Leslie Allen, a heriodd Corbett Wilson i ras ar draws y môr i Iwerddon. Er nad oedd yr un ohonyn nhw wedi hedfan lawer mwy na 30 milltir unrhyw bryd, penderfynodd y ddau yn uchelgeisiol y bydden nhw'n hedfan drosodd i Iwerddon, drwy Gaer a Chaergybi. Cychwynnodd y ddau ar eu taith ar brynhawn 17 Ebrill.

Dilynodd Allen y rheilffyrdd i'r gogledd, ond cafodd Corbett Wilson ei daro gan wyntoedd a oedd wedi codi. Roedd y tywydd yn waeth na'r disgwyl a chafodd cwmpawd Wilson ei ryddhau a'i gollu. Heb gwmpawd, chwiliodd am unrhyw le y gallai lanio a sylwodd ar gae islaw, sef fferm ger Henffordd fel digwyddodd pethau. Wedi glanio heb drafferth, llwyddodd i gael liffi i westy a'r diwrnod wedyn aeth i chwilio am gwmpawd, petrol ac olew newydd i'w awyren. Ar y pryd, roedd yr injan mewn awyren yn defnyddio olew castor at iro. Mantais olew castor oedd nad oedd yn cymysgu â'r petrol. Yr anfantais oedd bod angen bron cymaint o olew ar yr injan â phetrol.

Yn achos Corbett Wilson, y broblem ychwanegol oedd bod yr olew castor a brynodd yn Henffordd yn olew o'r radd anghywir ac o fewn ychydig filltiroedd ar ôl codi a throi am y gorllewin, dechreuodd yr injan fethu. Unwaith eto bu'n rhaid iddo ddisgyn ond y tro hwn roedd ymhell uwchben y Mynydd Du. Yn wyrthiol, llwyddodd i ddod o hyd i'r unig ddarn o dir gwastad am filltiroedd o gwmpas: cae yng Ngholfa, Sir Faesyfed.

Mae'n rhaid ei fod yn credu bod y ras i Iwerddon wedi'i hen gollu erbyn hyn. Ond pan gyrhaeddodd ei fecanig y diwrnod wedyn gyda'r radd gywir o olew a phetrol, clywodd y newyddion trasig am Damer Allen. Roedd wedi cyrraedd Caer fel y trefnwyd ac wedi cychwyn eto am Gaergybi lle cafodd ei weld yn hedfan allan i'r môr – sef y tro olaf iddo gael ei weld.

Mae'n rhaid bod hyn yn ysgytwad i Corbett Wilson; os nad oedd eisoes yn gwybod mor beryglus oedd y daith roedd yn ceisio'i chyflawni. Ond yn eofn ddigon, cychwynnodd eto ar yr hyn y mae ef yn ei ddisgrifio fel 'heddiad hyfryd dros rostir a mynydd-dir tuag at y môr' gan gyrraedd Wdig tua 7.00am ar 21 Ebrill. Treuliodd y noson yng ngwesty gwych Rheilffordd y Great Western, Gwesty Bae Abergwaun.

Drannoeth, wrth iddo adael Wdig am 5.47am, roedd y tywydd yn berffaith. Ond 20 milltir o arfordir Iwerddon fe hedfanodd i mewn i law trwm a chymylau trwchus. Dechreuodd ei injan hefyd gam-danio a dechreuodd ei gwmpawd wamalu hefyd, felly aeth ymlaen yn ddall am rai milltiroedd nes iddo sylwi, drwy doriad yn y cymylau, ar gaeau islaw yn Crane, ger Enniscorthy, a phenderfynodd lanio.

Yn y glaw trwm, fe laniodd y Bleriot a daliodd i fynd nes cael ei atal yn y pen draw gan yr hyn y mae'n ei ddisgrifio fel 'clawdd cerrig Wexford o'r iawn ryw'. Ond roedd wedi cyrraedd a gallai hawlio iddo'i hun y clod am fod y person cyntaf i hedfan yn llwyddiannus rhwng y ddwy wlad.

### **Factoid**

The first successful manned flight between Great Britain and Ireland was made on 22 April 1912 by Denys Corbett Wilson, who took off from Goodwick in Pembrokeshire at 5.47am and landed in Crane in Co. Wexford just over 100 minutes later.

Cafodd yr heddiad llwyddiannus cyntaf rhwng Prydain Fawr ac Iwerddon ei gyflawni ar 22 Ebrill 1912 gan Denys Corbett Wilson, a gododd o Wdig yn Sir Benfro am 5.47am ac a laniodd yn Crane yn Sir Wexford ychydig dros 100 munud wedyn.

Corbett Wilson was racing his friend and fellow aviation enthusiast, Damer Allen, whose plane was observed flying out to sea from Holyhead on 18 April 1912, but was never seen again.

Roedd Corbett Wilson yn rasio ei ffrind ac un o'i gyd-seligion hedfan, Damer Allen, y cafodd ei awyren ei weld yn hedfan tuag at y môr o Gaergybi ar 18 Ebrill 1912, ond na chafodd ei weld byth eto.

During the First World War, Corbett Wilson would go on to serve in the Royal Flying Corps. In May 1915, he was killed when his plane was shot down during a reconnaissance mission.

Yn ystod y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, aeth Corbett Wilson ymlaen i wasanaethu yn y Corfflu Hedfan Brenhinol. Ym mis Mai 1915, cafodd ei ladd pan gafodd ei awyren ei saethu i lawr yn ystod taith ragchwilio.

### **Related Resources**

Donal MacCarron, *Letters from an Early Bird: The Life and Letters of Denys Corbett Wilson 1882-1915* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2006)

Liam Byrne, *History of Aviation in Ireland* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1980)

Mike Lewis, "1912 photo shows take off of first flight over Irish Sea", *County Echo*, 19 October, 2019, archived at <https://perma.cc/B3WM-BJGG>

Bryan R. Swopes, "22nd April 1912", *This Day in Aviation*, 22 April, 2017, archived at <https://perma.cc/5TJM-FE8D>

Derek Webb, "100 Minutes", *Derek Webb*, 3 July, 2020, archived at <https://perma.cc/6YZN-4TZS>

### **Official Website**