

Avanke, Bever, Castor:

the story of

BEAVERS IN WALES

Bryony Coles



BeaverCON 2020
Alicia Leow-Dyke
Welsh Beaver Project



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Avanke, Bever, Castor: the story of BEAVERS IN WALES

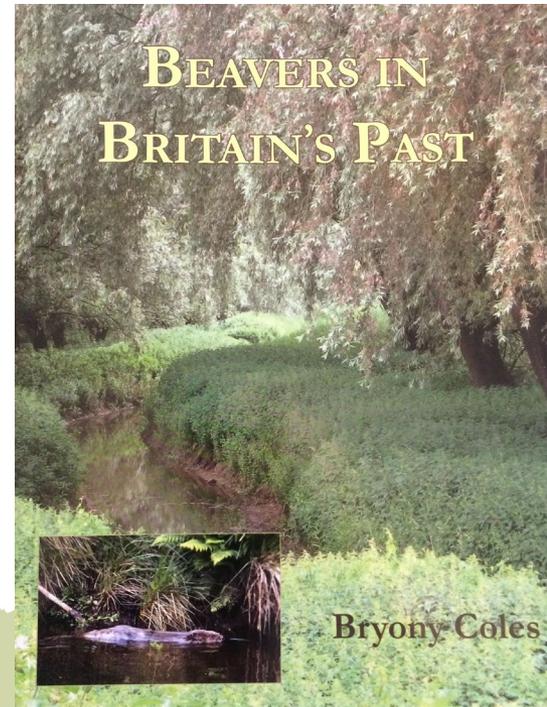
Bryony Coles



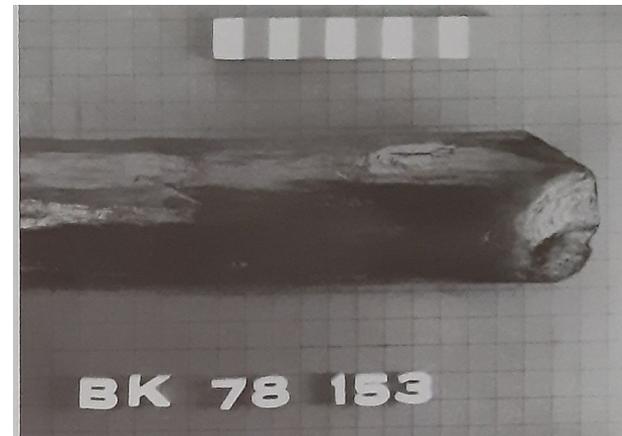
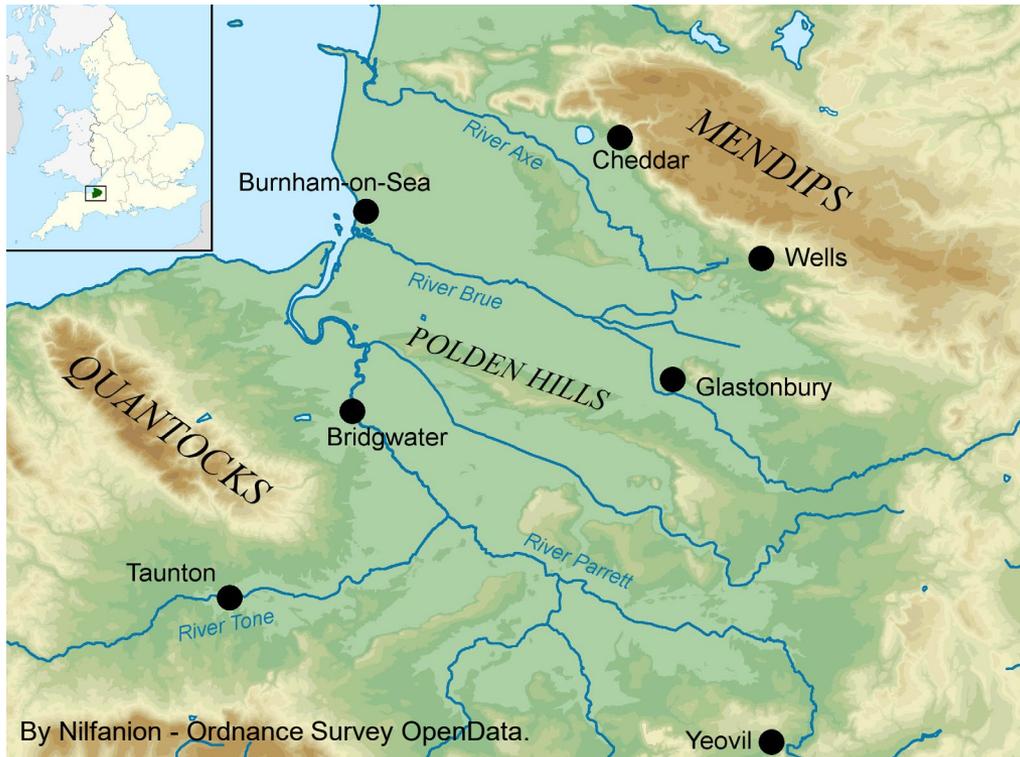
Bryony Coles is an archaeologist, formerly Professor of Prehistory at the University of Exeter.

Her research has focused on wetland projects and it was the discovery of ancient beaver-gnawed wood that sparked her interest in the history of beavers, from across Britain and into Western Europe.

Author of *Beavers in Britain's Past*.



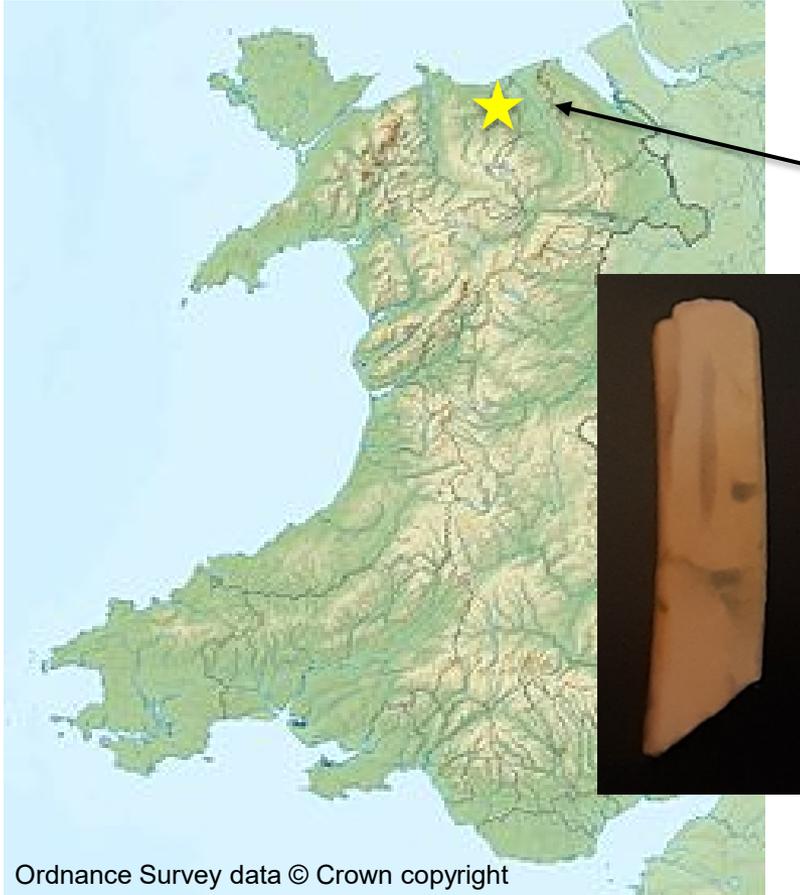
Human or Beaver



Wales/Cymru



Early Evidence

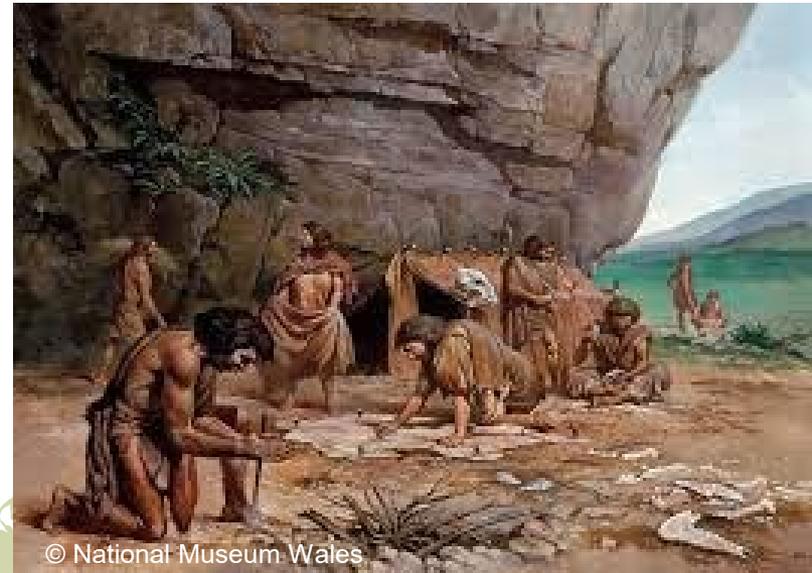


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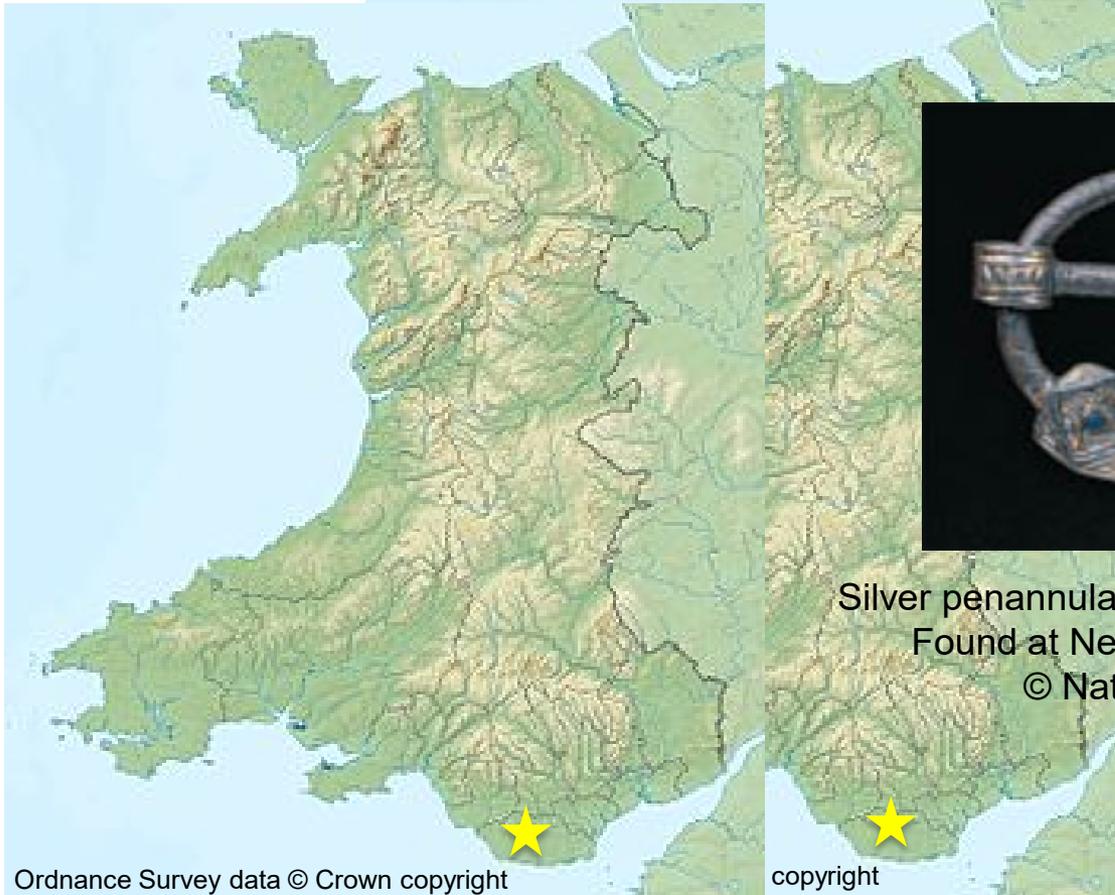
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Later Prehistory – Newton Moor



Silver penannular brooch eighth or ninth century AD.
Found at Newton Moor, Vale of Glamorgan.

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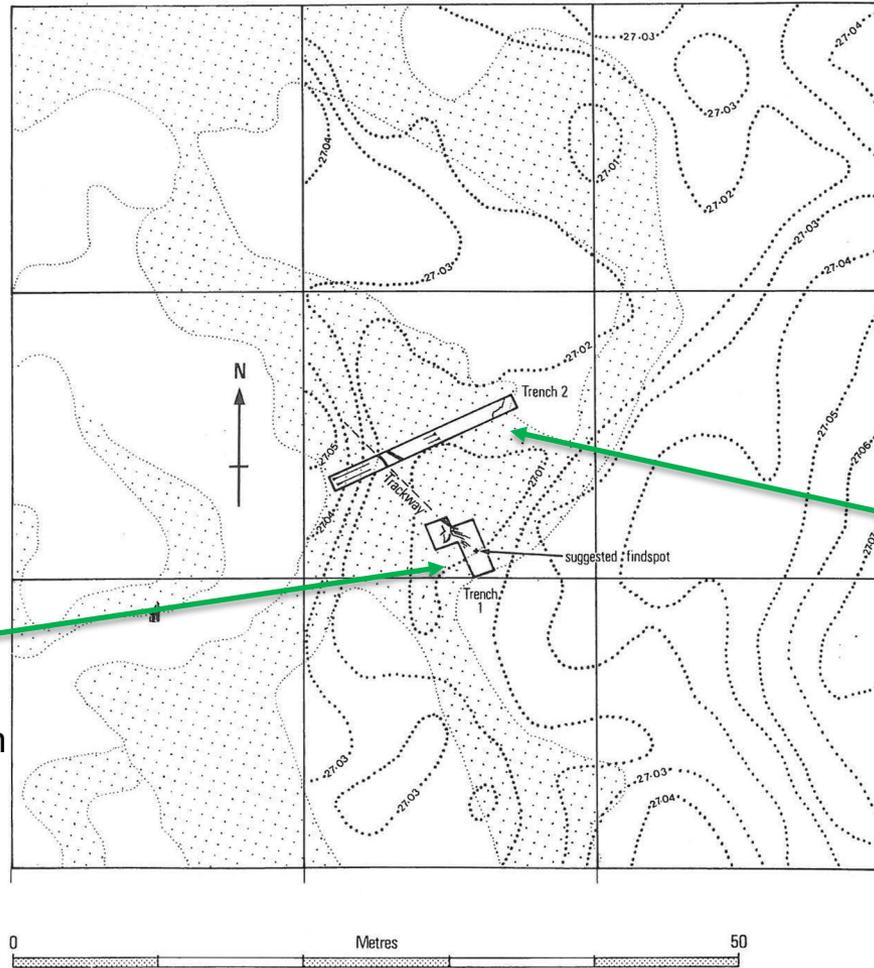


Later Prehistory – Newton Moor

Brooch found in a landscape of former pools and irregular channels interspersed with small islands.

Trench 1

Undisturbed peat deposits. An alignment of logs between trench 1 and trench 2, which may have formed a simple trackway.



Trench 2

Two branches displayed gnawed marks characteristic of beaver activity.

Figure 15 Newton Moor 1991. Plan of geophysical survey, showing low resistance features (shaded) and 10 cm contours, together with the positions of Trenches 1 and 2. Heights in metres above Ordnance Datum.

Later Prehistory – Newton Moor



© Laurie Campbell



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Prehistoric wood cut by a human using an axe.



© Coles, 2019

Prehistoric wood gnawed by a beaver.



Later Prehistory – Caldicot



Why Reintroduce Beavers?

- ❖ Ecological and environmental reasons aside.
- ❖ Some of the questions/statements we receive:
 - Are they native to Wales?
 - What is the link with Wales?
 - It has been so long since they were last here!
- ❖ Answers:
 - Yes
 - Cultural
 - Not as long as you may think!



Cultural Links



Llostlydan

Very old name meaning Broadtail.

First written reference in Wales dates back to 940 AD in the *Laws of Hywel Dda*



Llostlydan

The Laws stated:

'The king is to have the worth of Beavers, Martens, Ermines in whatsoever spot they are killed, because from them, the borders of the King's garments are made.'

Pelts

Stoat = 12 pence

Pine Martens = 24 pence

Beavers = 120 pence



Afanc/Afangc/Avanke



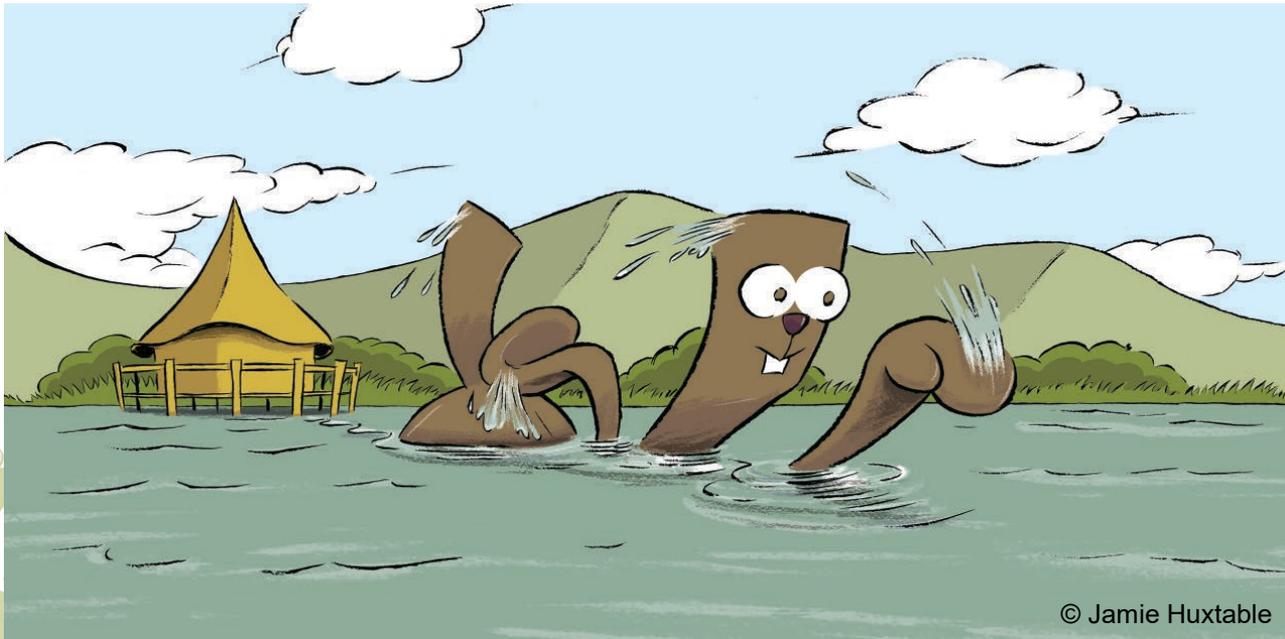
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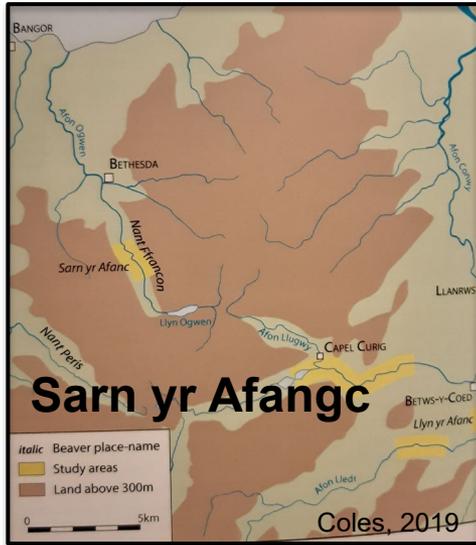
The Afanc

Yr avanc er ei ovyn The afanc am I, who, sought for, bides
Wyv yn llech ar vin y llyn; In hiding on the edge of the lake;
O don Llyn Syfaddon vo Out of the waters of Syfaddon Mere
Ni thynwyd ban aeth yno Was be not drawn, once he got there

Syfaddon Mere is a lake in mid Wales, now known as Llangors Lake. Today's Llangors Afanc is much friendlier:



Places Names



Llyn-yr-Afanc
Nant Ffrancon



Llyn-yr-Afanc



Bedd yr Afanc



Extinction Date



“The Teify, of all the rivers in Wales and those in England south of the Humber, is the only river where you can find beavers. In Scotland, or so they tell me, there is again only one stream where beavers live, and even there they are exceedingly rare.”

Itinerary Through Wales, Gerald Cambrensis 1188 AD

- Beavers close to extinction back then?
- General assumption that beavers became extinct in Wales around the Middle Ages.
- Various accounts of beavers throughout the centuries.



Extinction Date

[C] As to the beavers, tho' we may not rely on the authority of Giraldus in many things he relates, (as one who writ in an age less cautious and accurate, and when nothing pleas'd so much as what excited the admiration of the Reader) yet in this case I see but litt'e reason to question his veracity. Moreover, that there were formerly Beavers in this Kingdom, seems much confirmed; in that there are two or three Ponds or Lakes in Wales, well known at this day, by the name of Lhyn yr Avangk, i.e. Beaver-pool. The vulgar people of our age, scarce know what creature that Avangk was; and therefore some have been perswaded, that 'twas a Phantom or Apparition which heretofore haunted Lakes and Rivers. As for the name, I take it for granted that 'tis deriv'd from the word Avonog, i.e. Fluviatilis; as Lhwynog, (a Fox) signifies Sylvaticus, from Lhwyn, Sylva. And for the signification, 'tis not to be controverted; some old Poets so describing it, that I doubt not, but they meant a Beaver.

Beside the Beaver, we have had some other beasts in Wales...

(Edward Lhuyd 1695, 645)



Extinction Date

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Reintroduction – First Attempt?

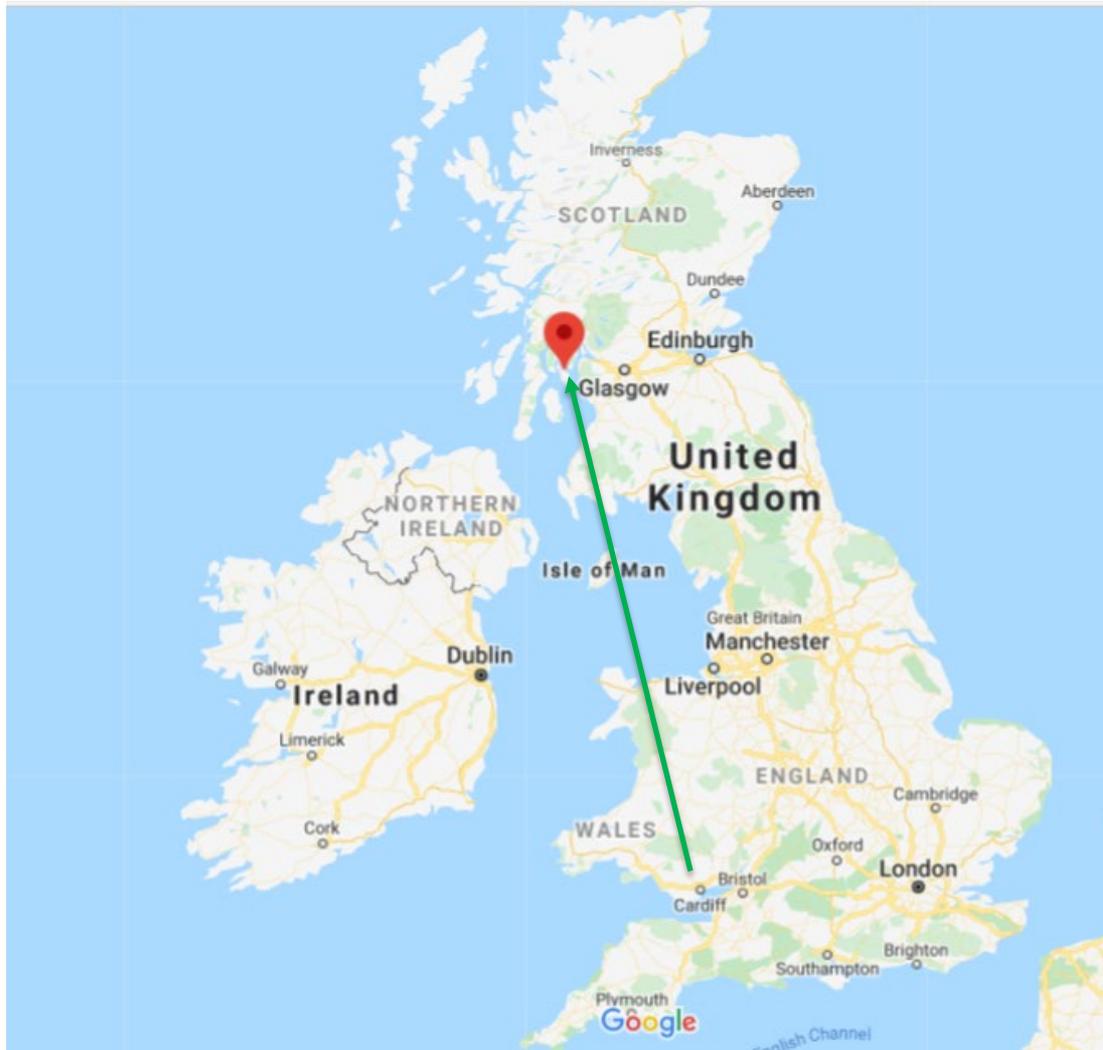


Reintroduction – First Attempt?

- The 3rd Marquis of Bute.
- Plans for beavers began in 1872.
- Mainly interested in beavers for his Scottish Island, Isle of Bute on the West Coast.
- Beavers imported by Frank Buckland, son of a popular naturalist at the time.
- Beavers imported from Europe in 1874 – one pair delivered to Cardiff.



Reintroduction – First Attempt?



Cardiff Castle



**Beaver
decorations in
the library and
roof garden.**



Recent Attempts



PROSIECT
**AFANCOD
CYMRU**

**WELSH
BEAVER
PROJECT**



The Wildlife Trusts in Wales



WILDLIFE TRUSTS
WALES



Montgomeryshire
Maldwyn



South and West Wales
De a Gorllewin Cymru



YMDDIRIEDOLAETHAU
natur
GWENT



Sir Faesyfed
Radnorshire



Britain

Scotland

- 1998 - Initial public consultation.
- 2009 - 2014 Scottish Beaver Trial.
- 2015 - Final report submitted to Scottish Government.
- 2016 - Scottish Government minded to allow beavers to stay.
- 2019 - Beavers granted legal protection.

England

- 2001 - Enclosed beaver project in Kent.
- 2008 - Feasibility studies completed.
- 2014 - Wild beavers discovered in Devon.
- 2015 - Licence granted to Devon Wildlife Trust.
- 2015 - 2020 River Otter Beaver Trial.
- 2020 - Science and Evidence Report published.

Wales

- 2005 - Interest starts.
- 2012 - Feasibility studies completed.
- 2014 - Initial release site selected, but still no beavers!



Will Beavers Return to Wales?



- Licence submitted – awaiting a response from the statutory body in Wales, Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- In due course NRW will run a public consultation.
- We have undertaken our own local consultation - the response has mainly been supportive.



Issues Raised

- Impacts upon farming, trees and fisheries.
- Potential to cause flooding.
- Logistics of beaver management.
- Impact on existing native species.
- Disease risks to humans and livestock.
- Population control issues.
- Length of time beavers have been extinct in Wales.



Will Beavers Return to Wales?



- Established a Volunteer Beaver Management Network to address any adverse impacts – advisory service.
- Reintroduction will be monitored over five years - ecological, geo-morphological and socio-economic monitoring.
- We will continue to raise awareness of beavers and their benefits.



Management Tool



In addition:

Beaver enclosure at Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve (Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust) to assist with habitat restoration.



www.welshbeaverproject.org



PROSIECT AFANCOD CYMRU
WELSH BEAVER PROJECT

Ymddiriedolaethau natur CYMRU
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Basic Information Impact Management Benefits FAQs Consultation Legalities **Support the Project**

Support the Project

Welsh Beaver Project Appeal

Since the start of the Welsh Beaver Project in 2005 a lot of the groundwork has been completed with welcome assistance and funding from the Welsh Government, but there is still lots more work to do before our goal is reached. We aim to reintroduce beavers to the wild in Wales within the next two years. In the upcoming months we need to: select and prepare reintroduction sites; provide comprehensive information to support licence applications; plan and undertake monitoring – including baseline surveys; train and equip volunteers; develop opportunities for education and recreation, as well as sourcing, checking and releasing the beavers.

We urgently require funding to get this project off the ground as no further funding is available from Welsh Government sources. The only funding is through the generosity of private organisations such as the People's Postcode Lottery and individuals.

Your donations really will ensure the return of wild beavers to the Welsh countryside. Please give whatever you can afford!

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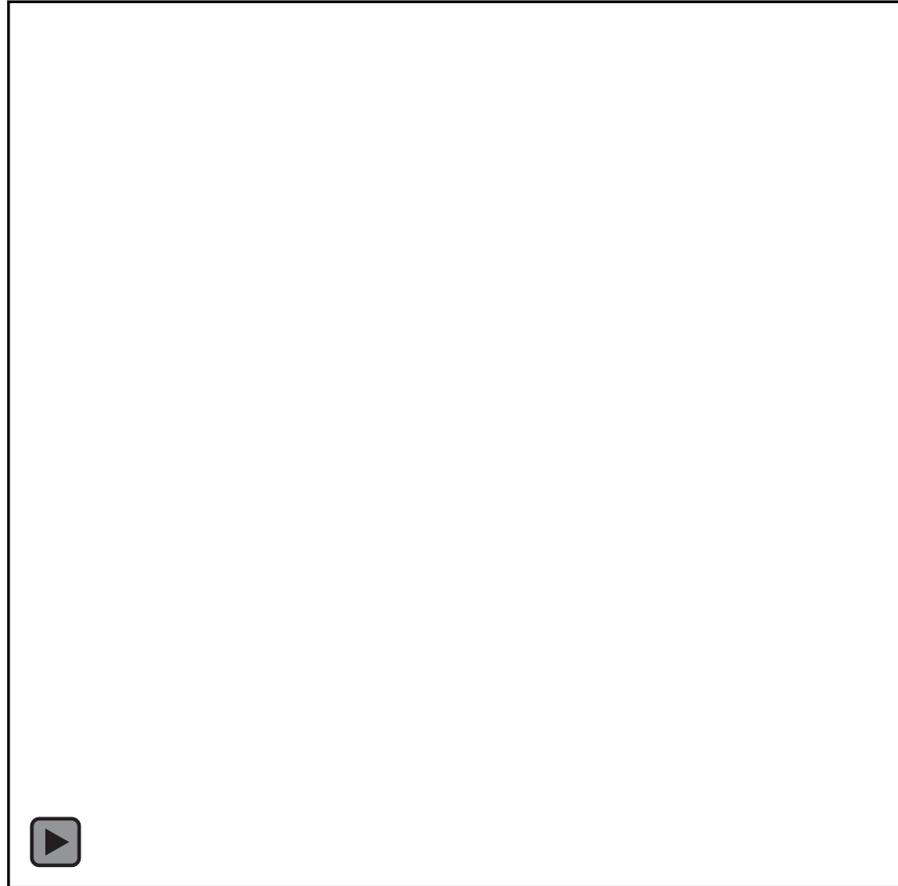
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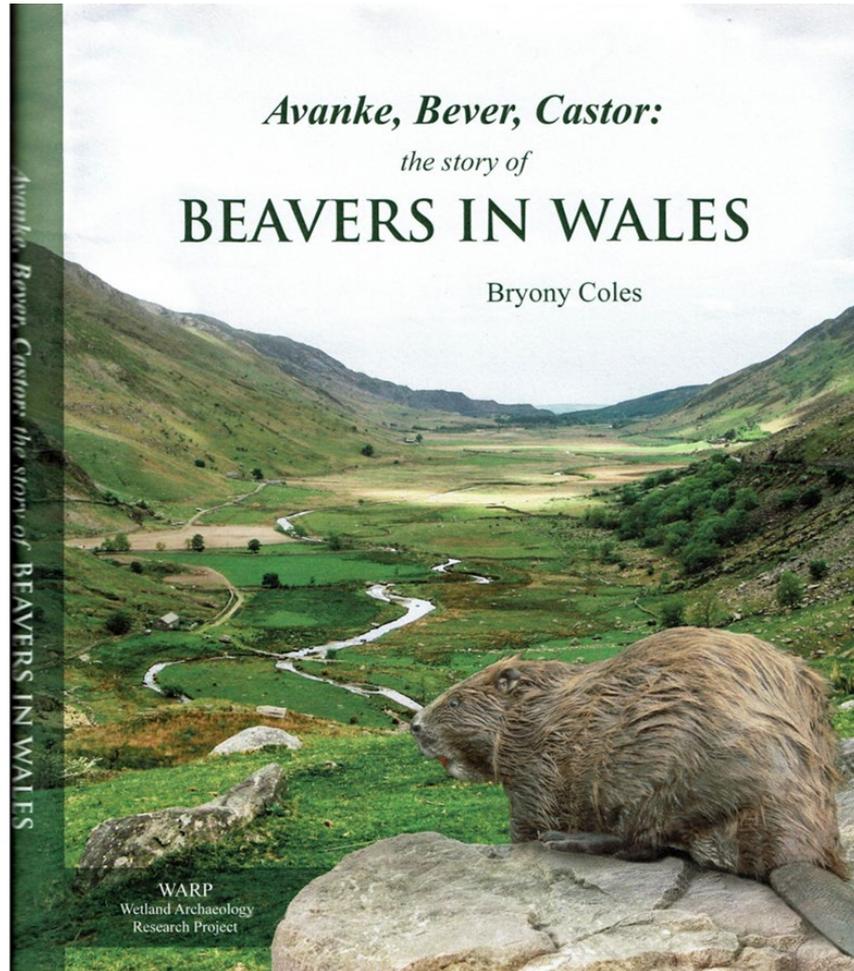
The one question we keep asking....



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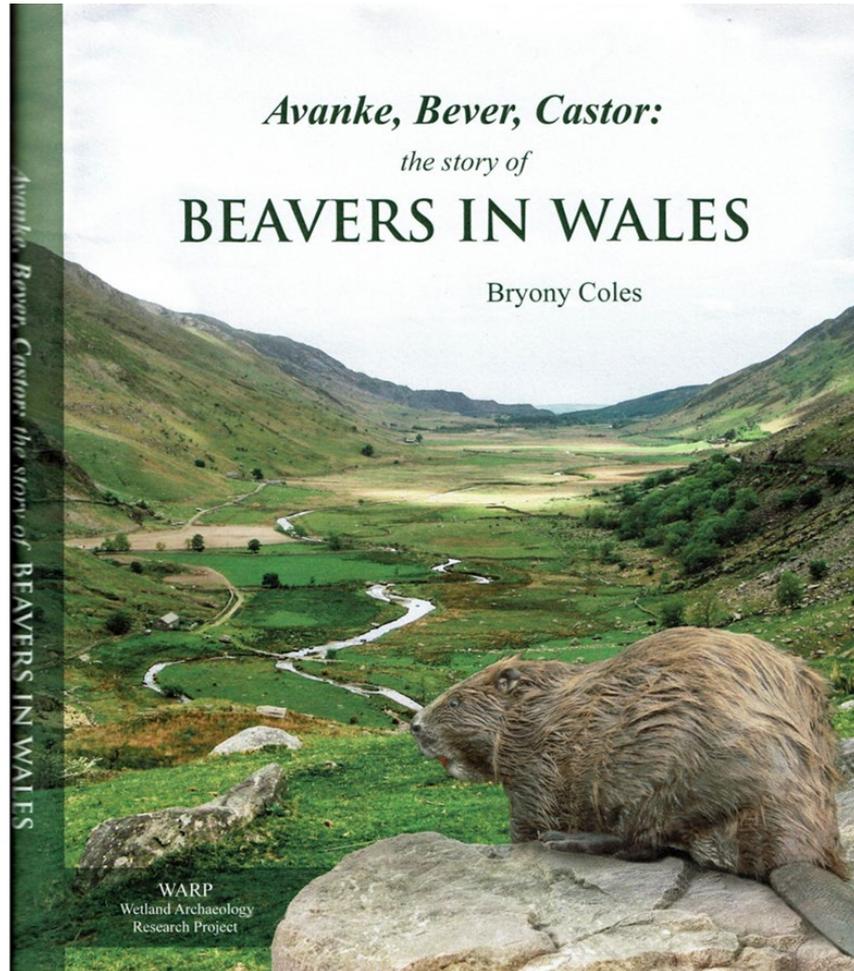
Thank you! Diolch!



*And a special thank
you to Bryony Coles.*

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