

### **Alison Lea Wilson, - Director of Cwmni Halen Môn Môn**

Alison Lea-Wilson was educated in Hampshire and at Bangor University where she achieved a Ba in English and a PGCE. She taught for 2 years but quickly realised that self employment was more enjoyable, if every bit as challenging.

In between having 3 children, Alison helped grow oysters, picked mussels and sold seafood and then started Anglesey Sea Zoo with her husband, David, and a friend. Over the 23 years they ran it, it welcomed 2.5 million paying visitors and employed over 250 people. Alison took responsibility for the retailing, catering, HR and training.

In 2007 the Sea Zoo was sold to allow both Alison and David to concentrate on growing The Anglesey Sea Salt Co Ltd. It now employs 18 people, exports to at least that number of countries and has blue chip customers ranging from Heston Blumenthal, Pepsi Cola, Waitrose, M & S, and Green & Blacks Chocolate among many others.

The 2 businesses have attracted at least 20 awards with notable ones being for raising the level of world gastronomy from European chefs and gaining a 3\*\*\* Gold award in the Annual Top 50 Foods in the UK from 8800 entries. This was for Halen Môn Umami Sea Salt, developed with another Welsh business – the Mushroom garden. It has recently been designated one of the 50 top food companies in Britain, along with Patchwork Pate and The Coconut Kitchen in Wales.

Alison is the food and drink sector representative and Vice Chair of the Anglesey Destination Partnership, a private sector/council partnership set up to attract visitors to Anglesey, Secretary of the Anglesey Farmers' Market and Co Leader of Slow Food Cymru and chair of Gorau Môn a partnership of hospitality, retail and producers on Anglesey.

Her interests outside work are also food-related; cooking, entertaining friends and reading, and she has a mild obsession with sour dough- her 'starter' is now 4 years old.

2014 was a busy year for the Lea-Wilsons with a new Saltcote and Visitor Centre being built, David becoming High Sheriff of Gwynedd, and both David and Alison receiving Honorary Fellowships of Bangor University, and Halen Môn receiving Protected Designation of Origin status, the first in Wales and the 60th PFN in Britain.