

Love Letter to Dolwyddelan

I first discovered Dolwyddelan by accident - or perhaps by fate. One June afternoon in 2024, when the noise and neatness of Ascot had finally worn thin, we escaped north in search of mountains, peace and maybe a decent Welsh cake. We parked outside a small stone cottage nestled beneath the slopes of Moel Siabod - the kind of place that looked like it had been waiting centuries for someone to fall in love with it. The river murmured nearby, the hills shimmered in soft light and I turned to Jason and said, "If this ever comes up for sale, we're buying it."

A few months later, it did.

That's when romance met reality. Moving day was less "grand relocation" and more "two men and a van - in meltdown." One small transit van. Thirty-two degrees of heat. Two hundred miles between Ascot and our new life. We made five round trips in two days, loading and unloading boxes until we looked like survivors of an endurance event no one would ever sign up for. When we finally carried the last box from the van to the roadside outside our new cottage - because, of course, there's no driveway - we stood there, sweat-soaked and smiling and knew we'd done the right thing.

Leaving Ascot meant leaving convenience behind: supermarkets open till midnight, Deliveroo at the door, trains every five minutes. In exchange, we got something slower, quieter and infinitely richer. Here, the rush hour involves one tractor and a wandering sheep. The only queue is behind the post van. And the view - mountains rising and fading into the mist - makes up for every missing takeaway menu.

Our friends thought we'd lost the plot. "You're moving *where*?" they asked, as if we'd announced plans to live on the moon. But the moment Dolwyddelan gets under your skin, you can't imagine being anywhere else. There's magic in the way the morning mist curls through the valley, the way church bells drift on the wind, and the way everyone seems to know you - and your business - within about 48 hours.

We'll admit, we were nervous. Moving from Ascot's polished suburbia to a small Welsh village as a same-sex couple, we wondered how we'd be received. Would we fit in? Would we feel at home? But those worries melted away faster than snow on a slate roof. The welcome was warm, genuine and gloriously unpretentious. People wave from cars, drop by with tools or advice and offer expert opinions on everything from log stores to sheep deterrents.

We've learning the rhythms of rural life now. We've learned that "just