



# The Unusual Plants of Wales



This Welsh Regional special issue is a double commemoration. Firstly it was issued in July 2001 to celebrate Welsh Flora, focussing on some of the most unusual indigenous wild flowers of the principality. They also mark the 127<sup>th</sup> anniversary of reclusive Welsh author Huw Puw Caru.

Caru is was a prolific author but his stories are often overlooked. He wrote almost exclusively in English, because he claimed that while Welsh was perfect for poetical works the English language has a richness particularly in the darker corners of the dictionary. For this his output is too often ignored, or even rejected by Welsh scholars. "Their loss" was his sole comment on the matter. His work often featured two recurring themes. Firstly prime numbers hence the 127<sup>th</sup> anniversary; he notably stopped writing after his 127<sup>th</sup> weird tale at the age of 83. 127 is the 31<sup>st</sup> prime number, and Caru lived to 93 years of age, 3 times 31. The year of his birth and death were both prime numbers, and many believe he willed his own death when it occurred for the symmetry of the event.

The other theme in his stories was the unusual plants of Wales, and though the stories were (partly) fictional, they lay against a background of old lore handed down from mouth to mouth, though both updated and advanced these legends and myths. Absence of any mention of him on the actual stamps reflects his desire to remain in the background. Some of his books even deliberately omitted his name as author hence absence of his name on these stamps.

The plants depicted featured in a book entitled 17 Shortest Stories published in 1973. Each story not only lacked a title, but they were originally printed without a page break. Readers were expected to recognise where one tale finished and another started. The Welsh Post Office was granted permission by the Caru Foundation to have different values on different sheets on the condition that the designs lacked margins to reflect the style of printing. You may have noticed there are 4 values, not a prime number. This was permitted because it would have appealed to Caru's sense of the absurd. The international postage rate should have been 68p, but was lowered by 1p to fit with this issue.

The stamps are described by the stories accompanying this issue, each being a version abridged by Caru himself. These shortened versions have been made available by Kind permission of the Caru Foundation. Caru's sole heir, Huw ap Huw Caru is reportedly writing more stories, based on the notes left behind by his father, updated for more modern times. Expect another issue in 2067 perhaps. In the meantime let these four stories describe the stamps.