

# Welsh Granddad and Nanny, and the Otter

## Chapter 1

### OTTER ALERT

This is a story about a Welsh Nanny and Granddad who live in the countryside in beautiful Wales.



They are lucky that a river flows past the end of their garden and they are happy to wave to everybody who passes by...

Walkers, cyclists, boats and canoes...

Dogs, horses, birds and sheep...

If it passes by they will wave to it.

If **you** pass by their garden they'll wave to you too...



that's a **pinky promise!**

There is beauty all around them.

Beautiful green hills and big tall trees.



Dark, starry nights

and very many animals, of all shapes and sizes, who come into their garden.

Their visitors include ducks, herons, moorhens, pesky rabbits (who like to nibble Nanny's flowers), and too many squirrels to count.

One day, Nanny and Granddad heard a local whisper that people had been spotting an otter around and about the river.

Then they heard that their friend, Myfanwy had seen the otter on Christmas Day. What a fabulous Christmas present for her!

Soon after, their friend Megan also spotted the otter and then... their friend Mari found him in her pond as casual



as can be,  
boldly  
eating  
water snails  
and  
annoying  
her ducks!

Nanny and Granddad were very pleased for their lovely friends, but they were also just a teeny bit green with envy at the same time.

Luckily, it seemed he was getting closer to their garden, so they crossed their fingers and made a big wish that they soon would also be lucky enough to spot that famous otter.



## 2

### WISHES DO COME TRUE

After all that wishing and **wishing** and **WISHING...** one morning Granddad called Nanny to the garden and showed her half a fish he'd found on the grass! It looked as though all their wishing had been rewarded by a visit from the otter during the night. And he had left his half a fish there to prove it.





“Just half of a fish?” you ask.

“Did he get full up?”

Well actually, that cheeky otter had eaten only the bits he liked best and had left the rest,



just like you children eating your roast potatoes and leaving your sprouts!

Nanny and Granddad wanted to learn more, so they asked the Otterman to visit. He knows A LOT about otters and

they had so many  questions. 

He turned up wearing camouflage clothes, with colours green and brown, all jumbled up so that he looked like a big, leafy bush.

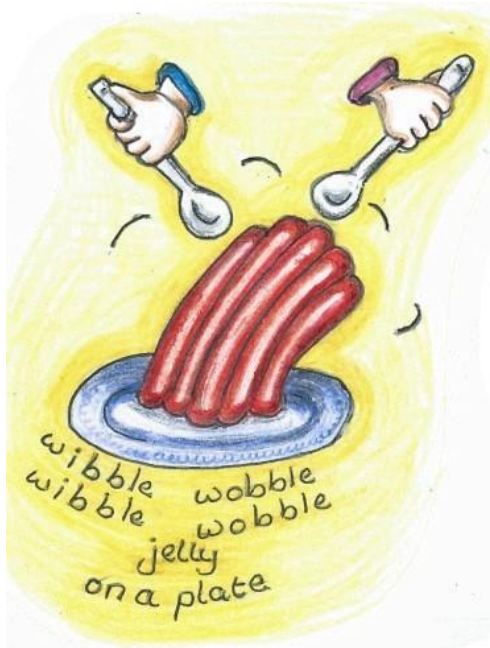
It was very hard to see him so Nanny asked him to keep jumping about, to make sure she and Granddad wouldn't spend too long talking to a real bush!



The Otterman explained that he wears his camouflage and spends a lot of time pretending to be a bush so that animals don't notice him. That means they carry on doing their animal jobs without having to worry that a human is getting too close for comfort. This is how he was able to learn so much about otters and kingfishers, and other river creatures...because they didn't even know he was there!



Nanny and Granddad learned a lot from the Otterman. He showed them the signs along the water's edge, which proved that an otter had visited. They found something called JELLY. It was a bit of a blob, a dark colour, a bit slimy, and a bit fishy smelly.



It was definitely not the kind of yummy jelly that goes wobble wobble at a birthday party!



They also spotted otter poop, which is called SPRRAINT. It has special smells in it, to send messages to any other otters who are in the area. Otters like to leave their spraint in a spot where the breeze will waft their message far and wide, maybe on a rock or a fallen log or even on a pile of sand, which they scrape up into a little otter sandcastle.



If there is a bridge near by... well, that would be the very bestest, most favouritest spot of all to leave some spraint.



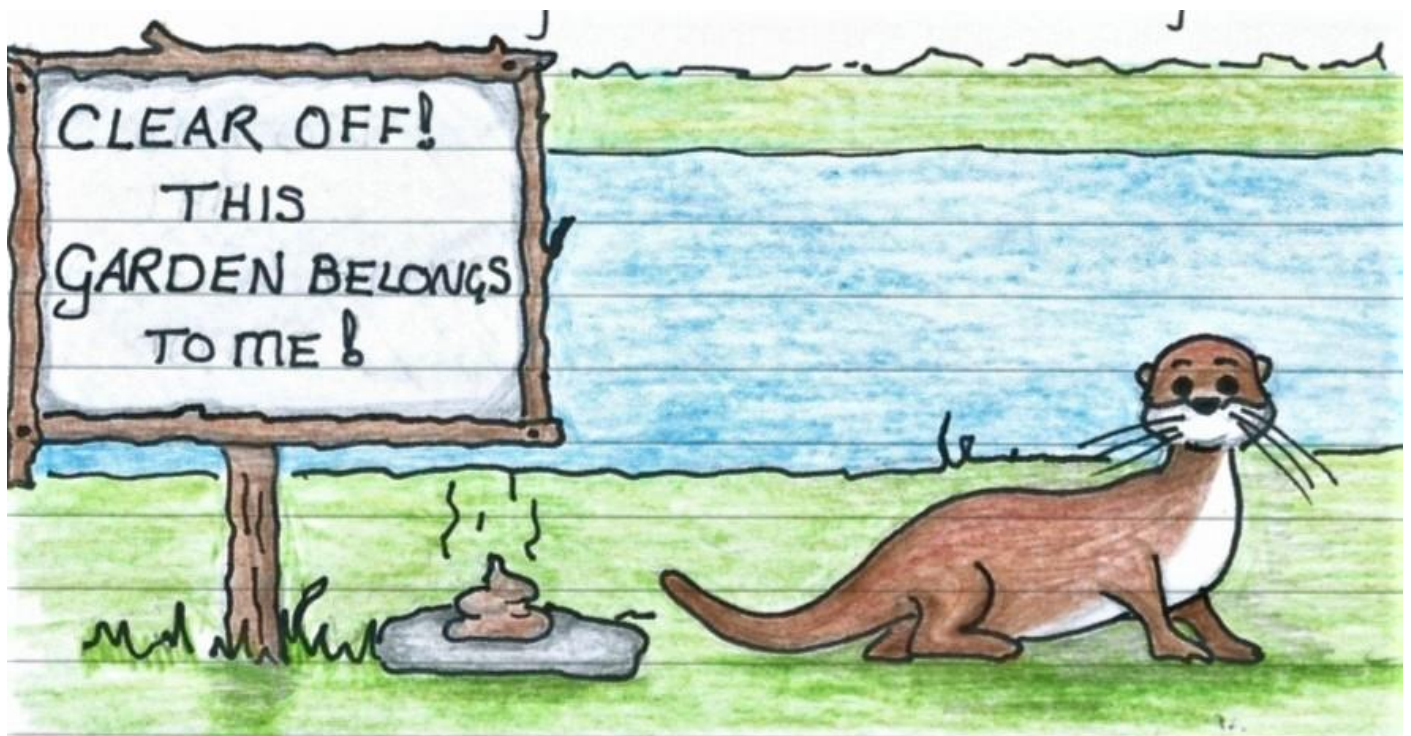
Maybe that's because it's nice and dry beneath a bridge so the rain won't wash it away, or maybe because it's a



bit breezy under there and so the otter smell will be carried a long, long way.

That little blob of poop might be saying to other otters...

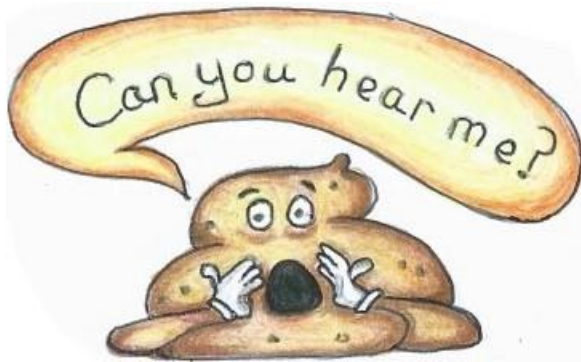
“Go away! This bit of water is ALL MINE”



Or maybe it's saying,

“Hey, Good-looking, I'd like to find me a boyfriend”

It's a good job humans don't send messages the same way as otters do?



Nanny and Granddad also learned about Otter slides.

When an otter uses the same spot over and over to slip into the water, his belly gradually rubs the grass away and makes a smooth groove on the bank, so he can splash



easily and quietly into the water... not quite the same as a slide next to the swings in the playground, but it's fun to believe the otter

enjoys his slippy, little patch of mud just as much as children enjoy their fast slide in the playground.

So, now that Welsh Nanny and Granddad knew a lot more about otter clues, it was time to....

**GET OUT AND SPOT ONE!**

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## Chapter 3

### MEETING AN OTTER

Now that Nanny and Granddad had learned some of the signs which showed an otter was visiting the area near their house, they decided they would have to be patient and go for lots of riverside walks, hoping to spot their new neighbour.

And so they did just that.

They went for a walk every day along the river bank, with their binoculars and cameras, always ready and hopeful for their first sighting.



Early one chilly morning, they set out on their daily search. The riverbank was very quiet, because most other people were still putting on their socks and brushing their teeth.

Suddenly, Granddad whispered to Nanny,

*“Shush!”*

He had spotted something just ahead. It was a swirl of muddy water beside the path. Then a line of bubbles raced across the water ‘pop, pop, pop’ to the other side of the river.

They sucked in a gasp and squinted their old eyes, looking hard at the opposite bank.

Oh my goodness, they could hardly believe what they saw...

In the shadows, deep beneath the bushes that hung over the water, there were two beady, black eyes, staring right back at them!



Those eyes gave them a stern look, that clearly said,  
“I’ve got my breakfast here, so just be quiet and let me get  
on with it, if you don’t mind!”

Nanny and Granddad stood as still as two statues, keeping  
their excitement scrunched up tight inside. They were so  
excited, they even forgot to breathe!

The otter settled down to eat his fish. He was very noisy  
and his table manners were something like...



Then, he dipped his face in the water and gave it a  
quick wash, which turned out to be quite good manners  
after all.





He disappeared beneath the water and blew a trail of bubbles to say goodbye as he swam away.

Nanny and Granddad let out their breathes with a big...Pheeew!



Just in time, as they were both about ready to explode!



At last they had joined that special club of very lucky people who have seen a wild otter! They felt as if they should be wearing a medal and they wanted to shout their exciting news to the whole world, but instead they kept a secret of the exact spot they'd seen him.

That's because otters are a PROTECTED SPECIES. That means they belong to a group of animals that need to be treated with special care. Maybe because there are not very many of them, or because they need a safe, peaceful place to live. Nobody is allowed to harm them or disturb their lives.

I'm sure the same rule must definitely apply to Nannies and Granddads, because, as we all know, they are very special too!

## CHAPTER 4

### POOR MR. RABBIT

Welsh Nanny and Granddad have a little stone Rabbit in



their garden. He sits by the water's edge, keeping an eye on the passing boats and walkers.

Welsh Nanny and Granddad noticed something odd happening to Mr. Rabbit... very often they would wake up in the morning to

find Mr. Rabbit lying on his side in the grass.

Granddad would go out and sit him up again, but the next morning...hey presto! Mr. Rabbit would be tipped over yet AGAIN!





They scratched their heads ... who was doing that?

They had a pretty good idea who the culprit was, but there was a way to find out for sure.

It was time to do a little bit of night time spying.

They set up an infrared, wildlife camera.

Infrared is a special light that lets the camera see in the dark. It means the camera can see an animal shape, even in the middle of the darkest night... just like superhero vision!



That was a perfect way to spy on the otter without scaring him.

When Granddad checked the camera in the morning, they were thrilled to see a video clip of the otter having a good old nosey at the camera. He had certainly spotted the new addition to his garden, but it didn't seem to bother him one tiny jot.

In fact, he seemed to quite enjoy being caught on film!



There was also a video that showed the otter run over to Mr. Rabbit, knock him flat on his back and do a naughty wee on him!

If a garden ornament could talk, he would definitely be groaning, *“Nooooooo! Not again!”*

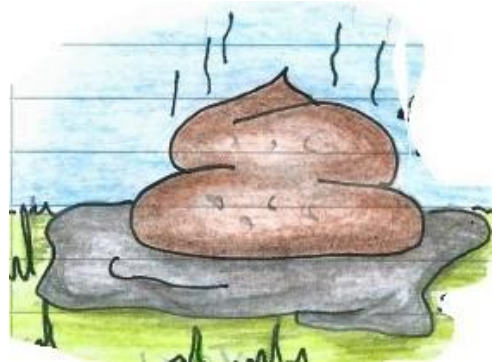
And if Granddad had known about that naughty otter wee, he might have sent Nanny out to pick up Mr. Rabbit!

Nanny and Granddad were very excited to add an otter to their list of garden visitors, but he was certainly not the best behaved guest...

he scratched holes in the lawn...

he made the grass turn yellow where he did his wees on it...

and he left his big, fat poops (spraint) on a rock by the water!



But these were his ways of telling the other animals that this garden belonged to **HIM** and so Nanny and Granddad were happy to let him carry on doing those things.

As the nights went by, the otter visited the garden many times. He sometimes stayed to torment Mr. Rabbit, or eat a quick snack, but more often, he would just have a busy sniff around. He was checking no intruders had sneaked into his garden with their new, unwelcome smells. If he thought he could detect that a stranger had visited, he would do a new spraint and maybe a couple of wees, to spread his own smell around and make sure, once again, that everybody knew that the garden belonged to of him ...

Watch out Mr. Rabbit! He's coming your way!

Then the otter would slip back into the water and hurry off to the next job on his busy, busy list of Things to Do and Places to Go.

Sometimes the camera didn't show any visits for days, or even weeks, and then he would just casually pop up again as if he'd never been away.

Nanny and Granddad wondered why he stayed away, and where did he go during those times when he didn't visit them????

They needed to learn a lot more about otters!



## 5

### LEARNING MORE ABOUT OTTERS

Nanny and Granddad found out that there are lots of people all over the UK who care very much about otters and want them to live safe, comfortable lives.

A lot of these people share their photographs and knowledge in a group called the 'Otter Trust'.

It's important to know how many otters there are, and where they live in the UK, so that we can all help keep them safe and healthy.

In Wales, the group is called **South Wales Otter Trust...SWOT** for short, and this group helped Nanny and Granddad learn a lot more about their handsome visitor...

They learned that otters like to own a long stretch of water. It might be along a river or canal, maybe in a lake, or even on the sea shore.

Everybody loves a day at the beach!



This is the otter's **TERRITORY** and he is not very happy about other otters coming to visit his patch without an invitation.



It takes a long, long time to travel from end to end, so the otter needs places to stop for a rest or a meal along

the way, just like the otter who stopped in Welsh Nanny and Granddad's garden.

The otter might make a hidey hole in some brambles or under an old tree root...somewhere tucked away and out of sight.



This resting place is called a **COVER** and he might spend time there having a little snooze, or cleaning his fur, to keep it warm and waterproof while he's swimming.

But otters need a proper home too, especially a Mummy otter who will want somewhere safe and dry to take care of her babies. This place is called a HOLT.

Baby otters will spend a long time underground in the holt, until their Mum is quite certain they are big enough and sensible enough to be trusted in the outside world... a REALLY long time!

Mum keeps them safely tucked up inside the holt for about ten weeks, which is a long time in a young otter's life...

That would be like you staying in your bedroom until you are nearly four years old!



When, they finally get to see the big, wide, outside world the young otters will stay close to their Mum until they are about fifteen months old, and they have learned how to swim and find their own food. For a human this would give you more than twenty years to learn to cook and get yourself a job!



And then, one day the otter Mum decides her youngsters are quite big enough to look after themselves, instead of nagging her for dinner all the time!

She sends them off to go and find their own place to live.



This is a good thing, because it means otters are spreading across the country, so, hopefully more and more people will be lucky enough to spot one.

Who knows, one day soon you might spot an otter at the local chip shop on a Friday night, waiting in the queue for some fish and chips.....

..... because they do like fish so very much!



*“Would you like vinegar on that, Mr. Otter?”*

So, Welsh Nanny and Granddad truly hope you will all get to see a wild otter one day ...

But when that day comes, be sure to remember how special they are, and .....

.....

.....



**how lucky you are!**

**THE END**

