

The first in the series “People Behind the Business” I interview Billy O’Connor and Alice Hayes, a wonderful young couple who operate **The Great Blasket Island Experience.**

We are so lucky to have such diversity of business’s in Dingle. Restaurants, pubs, shops and activity providers, all combine to create the most wonderful experiences and memories for our visitors. We have decided to showcase some of the businesses we work with on the Dingle Peninsula.

### **Why do you do what you do and why in Dingle ?**

*The business was originally in Billy’s family for years and was started by Billy’s Grandfather. Peter Callery. When he passed away, his boat was docked for a few years until in 2014 Billy and I decided to start the Great Blasket Island Experience.*

*It was always an ambition of Billy’s that he would fix up the boat and the cottage on the island, so in 2014 we started on our adventure. Until then, there were two habitable cottages on the Island which were used by the Office of Public Works, to house guides. We took over the cottages, and we now have three rental properties. A fourth is the coffee shop, and there is a fifth which is a work in progress.*

### **What does your typical day look like?**

*During the season we have people staying in the three cottages, and there is also the couple who manage the coffee shop for us. We bring provisions out to them daily.*

*Billy’s tours depart from the pier in Dingle, normally at 10 am and I will go out with him to serve the guests tea/coffee on board. Billy will give them all the information on the eco-tour on the way to the island. When we land on the island, all the guests will walk around the island and also visit the coffee shop. It is normal to spend 3.5 to 4 hours on the island. During this time we have to bring all the provisions to the coffee shop, and change the laundry in the cottages. Our son Joey, who is six, loves to come along, but this year it will be our other son, Harry’s turn. We then return to Dingle in the afternoon and I have emails and*

*reservations to deal with along with managing the accounts.*

**What do you love about your job and what motivates you?**

*Knowing that we are continuing a tradition, both as a family, and for the past generations of people who lived on the stunning Blasket Island. We can see the merit in every little task we do.*

*The cottages were built in the 1920's by the Congested District Board to provide better living standards for the islanders, but the island was abandoned in 1953. In the 1970's Billy's Granddad refurbished the cottages. Because of exposure, you always have work to do, and are always fighting the elements. Whether its replacing a woodworm eaten floor, or repairing a wall, we are laying the blocks of our future, and for our boy's futures.*

**What is your favourite place on the peninsula, and what makes it so special?**

*The Great Blasket Island is definitely our favorite place, because there is nowhere like it in the world. We are so honoured to work and live here, and are very passionate about keeping the authenticity of the Island. We love that we can share it with other people, so that they can grow to love it too!*



**Tell me one thing that what inspires you every day.**

*Knowing that our two boys Joey (5) & Harry (4) will have this wonderful place to grow up in, and to have in their futures, and for us as parents, the knowledge that the time that we*

*spend with them on the island, will create everlasting memories.*

**If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would buy?**

*A pint of Guinness!*

In conversation with Alice Hayes of The Great Basket Island Experience- May 2020.

Experience the Great Blasket Island for yourself and book our ***Blasket Basket two night package available here...***