

Croeso! — Welcome!

The Welsh Society of Western New England
Cymdeithas Cymreig Lloegr Newydd Gorllewino



April 2023 Website: WelshWNE.org Email: WelshWNE@gmail.com FaceBook: WSWNE

A Message From Our President, Susan Davies Sit

Croeso i'n cylchlythyr gwanwyn cynnar. Welcome to our Newsletter's early spring edition.

We have had a busy winter with our Christmas luncheon, St. David's Day celebrations, and a variety of online activities. You'll find photos and details from many of our recent events inside this issue.

In addition to our regular genealogy and Welsh language meetings, we've enjoyed some amazing presentations via Zoom in the past few months. These covered a 100-year-old bit of hidden history, poetry, food stories, and the story of Gareth Jones, a journalist who covered Stalin's starving of the people of Ukraine 90 years ago. Recordings of these four presentations are available in the [Past Events](#) section of our website.

We'll have more very interesting Zoom presentations later this year, including a famous author of Welsh-based novels, a photographer of slate miners from north Wales, and a live book reading by Pam Petro of her new book on *Hiraeth*.

Even though we had a mild winter, I know we are all looking forward to spring, and the emerging daffodils and snowdrops. As usual, our newsletter and website WelshWNE.org have all our wonderful events listed, so you are always in the loop.

*Mwynhewch y gwanwyn, ewch allan ac aroglwch y cennin pedr!
Enjoy spring, and get outside to smell the daffodils!*

St. David's Day Luncheon

By Magdalen Dowden, WSWNE Board Member

On March 4th, 2023, a gathering of more than thirty intrepid members and guests of WSWNE braved the snow to gather at The Nutmeg restaurant in East Windsor, Connecticut for our annual celebration to commemorate St. David's Day.

The room was cheerful with white covers on the chairs, white table cloths, and red napkins accented by pots of daffodils. A bar offered drinks including the colorful Red Dragon cocktail that we had tried at the North American Festival of Wales (NAFOW) in Philadelphia last September.

Our two youngest members, Aiden and Matthew, busied themselves with tickets for several prizes (the Penderyn whisky was a favorite). Two of our board members, Ed and Beth Brown, wore their traditional dress of Welsh lady and slate quarry worker.



Ed Brown, Slate Quarryman, and Glyn Dowden



Beth Roberts Brown and Evan Williams
photo by Wayne Korhonen

WSWNE member Janet Lewis read short obituaries of recently deceased members Gwladys Mahoney and Bronwen Hughes Wrinn, who are sorely missed. She then delivered the invocation before everyone enjoyed a wonderful lunch.

After the meal, we were greeted by president Susan Davies Sit, who brought us news of the Wrexham Football Club (soccer) owners, Americans Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds. Rob and Ryan host the show, *Welcome to Wrexham*, now in its second season streaming on Netflix.

Our president also read the proposed slate of WSWNE officers which was approved and accepted. Our 2023 officers are: President Susan Davies Sit, Vice President Annie Rodgers, Secretary Mark Taylor, and Treasurer Annie Rodgers.

Board member Glyn Dowden read a communication from the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford, to mark St. David's Day. Next, poet Adele Evershed, an immigrant from Cardiff, Wales, read several poems from her book *The A470 - Poems for the Road*, including *The Art of Embroidering a Road Through the Eye of Heaven*, which was the winning English language poem at NAFOW 2023.

Another accomplished poet, Robert Jones of Vermont, joined us via Zoom to read us his poem, *Clychau Aberddoe*, which he performed in Welsh. This was the winning Welsh language poem at NAFOW 2023. The poems were all wonderful and very moving—especially to those of us who are immigrants from Wales. In fact, they brought tears of Hiraeth to my eyes!

Following the poets, we were treated to a history of Heddwch Nain-Mamgu, Our Grandmothers' Peace, written and presented by Jacqueline Burke, a professor at George Mason University in Virginia and supported by lawyer and actress Jessie Roberts. They related the efforts of three Welsh women, Annie Hughes Griffiths, Elined Prys, and Mary Ellis to bring peace to the world following the horrors of

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World War One. These women succeeded in gathering 390,000+ signatures of Welsh women, an incredible feat in 1923. The paper with all the signatures stretched seven miles in length. The three women took their petition to the USA in 1924. They met with the President, Calvin Coolidge, and hand delivered copies of the petition to American women in New York and Washington DC. The purpose of their trip was to encourage American women to lobby Congress to join the League of Nations.

Following all of these wonderful presentations, we all stood and sang the Welsh national anthem, *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*, to mark the end of the afternoon's festivities.

I can honestly say, "a wonderful time was had by all."



Heddwch Nain-Mangu speakers
Jessie Roberts and Jacqueline Burek

Photos by Evan Williams unless otherwise noted.



Howard Davies won the bottle of Penderyn whisky.



Sarah Grant Ludwig, Poet Adele Evershed, Megan Evershed, and Beth Holden



Susan Davies Sit

St David's Day

The day we celebrate our patron saint and all things Welsh. The day we remember his guiding words:

*Gwnewch y pethau bychain.
(Do the little things.)*



Susan Davies Sit, Howard Davies, Magdalen Dowden

More St. David's Day Celebrating

By Ed Brown, WSWNE Board Member

On Wednesday, March 8, 2023, seven stalwart members braved the weather for our second annual WSWNE St. David's Day Walk which had been postponed the previous week because it snowed the night before St. David's Day. It was a wonderful, but cold, walk at Elizabeth Park in West Hartford, Connecticut. The paths were cleared of snow, but the wind was raw so we soon ducked into the open greenhouse filled with beautiful potted flowering bulbs ready for the annual sale that would be held in just a few days. There were many kinds of narcissus, tulips, and more, along with the iconic Welsh daffodils, all sure signs that spring is coming soon.



We wore Welsh flags and scarves and were stopped by people who asked about the flags, some who knew the flag and some who didn't. Cindy Evans, a passerby of Welsh and Irish descent, recognized the Welsh flag and took a photo with us as we ended our walk with a hot cider tailgate toast.



Beth Roberts Brown showing off the flag inside the greenhouse



Ed Brown, Beth Roberts Brown, Tina Davies, Susan Davies Sit, Margaret Korhonen, and Evan Williams warming up in the greenhouse.



Cindy Evans, Ed Brown, Beth Roberts Brown, Tina Davies, Susan Davies Sit, Margaret Korhonen, Evan Williams

Spring Zoom Events with WSWNE

Write to InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com to request a Zoom link for any of these presentations; please specify which one(s) you are interested in.

Genealogy-on-Zoom

Monday April 24, 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

This group shares research tips and success stories.

Concurrent in-person meeting from 10:30 to 4:30.

Welsh Conversation-on-Zoom

Every other Wednesday 5:30 PM (Beginner)

April 12 & 26

This is not a class, though there will be a little homework.

Every Tuesday 5:30 PM (Intermediate)

Chat in Welsh in a casual, friendly setting. We use imaginative weekly topics/questions which enable us to learn new vocabulary.

Visit our Website!

Be sure to visit the Welsh Society of Western New England often at www.WelshWNE.org. You'll find a full calendar of events, photos and videos from past events, profiles of the members of our Board of Directors, previous newsletters, and a resources page with links to all things Welsh. Check it out today!



Member's Art Exhibit

By Ed Brown, WSWNE Board Member

On Thursday, March 9, 2023 several WSWNE members attended the opening reception for the oil painting exhibition, *Ascending and Descending Worlds*, at the Hosmer Gallery of Forbes Library, Northampton, Massachusetts. The paintings include those of WSWNE member, poet, author, and artist, Margaret Lloyd. Many of her landscapes are influenced by the sea, sky, and mountains of Wales.

The group had fun carpooling to the site from their homes in Connecticut and Massachusetts. After the reception, we browsed the gallery and then enjoyed a great meal together at the famed Fitzwilly's Restaurant in downtown Northampton.



In front of Margaret Lloyd's magnificent artwork: WSWNE members John Bollard, Wayne & Margaret Korhonen, Beth Roberts Brown, Margaret Lloyd, and Susan Davies Sit



Ascending World by Margaret Lloyd



The Dogs of Wales and the People Who Love Them

By Annie Rodgers

I am a dog lover. Therefore, it did not escape my attention that there were lots of dogs no matter where we went in Wales. They ride the trains, go shopping, dine out, and attend church services. I found that a bit unusual. What I also found unusual, was the number of dog bowls filled with water lining the sidewalks and in front of churches. Some shops display signs in their windows offering free dog biscuits. One can't help but fall in love with a country and people who love dogs as much as the Welsh.



2023 Events in North America



Cymdeithas Madog, the Welsh Studies Institute of North America, is holding its first in-person Cwrs Cymraeg (Welsh Course) since 2018 at the University of Vermont in Burlington the week of July 16-23. **Cwrs Dinas y Frenhinas** or The Queen City Course, will feature six levels of Welsh language instruction. The cost for classes, food, and a shared room is \$1300 per person for the whole week. Friends and family can also register as “tag-alongs” if they will not be attending classes; merit scholarships will be available.

For an additional fee, you can join a field trip cruise on Lake Champlain aboard the Ethan Allen. Attendees can also expect workshops on Welsh interests and evening fun in the form of dancing, singing, pub nights, trivia and more. Find complete details at www.speakwelsh.org/courses/cwrs-cymraeg-summer-2023-the-in-person-cwrs-is-back/.



North American Festival of Wales Lincoln, Nebraska

August 30 - September 3, 2023

Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel

Room Rate: \$114 - \$134

www.nafow.org



Featuring Robot Arwyn, Ifor ap Glyn, Dylan Morris, Rhys Meirion, Gwawr Edwards & Steffan Lloyd Owen

Conwy Castle

A Welsh castle has been included in a ranking by Condé Nast Traveller of the 26 most beautiful castles in Europe. The town of Conwy is defined by its 21-tower medieval fortress which features a stunning castle surrounded by fortified walls that encircle the town for three-quarters of a mile. Commissioned by King Edward I in the 13th century, visitors are welcome to climb the castle towers' spiral staircases and walk a complete circle around the battlements.



Source:

www.cntraveller.com/gallery/most-beautiful-castles-in-europe

For more about Conwy Castle:

www.cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/conwy-castle

*Photos by Diane Jeffer
Above: walking the battlements
Left: Castle interior from one of its towers
Below: Conwy Castle from the battlements*



The Anglesey Bone Setter

Adapted from articles at bbc.com and bbc.co.uk

In 2010, DNA mapping has shed light on a centuries-old mystery regarding the origins of a child shipwrecked on Anglesey who helped shape medical history. Two boys who could not speak English or Welsh, washed up on the north Wales coast in about 1744. One boy survived only a few days, but his brother, aged seven or eight, was adopted by a doctor and given the name Evan Thomas.

Young Evan began to take an interest in the doctor's work and soon demonstrated extraordinary skill. First exhibiting his foreign talent on injured animals, Evan Thomas used touch alone to feel where bones were broken, and would deftly manipulate the edges to ensure a better join when the fracture began to knit. He was the first in Britain to use traction and splints to pull apart the over-lapping edges of breaks and immobilize limbs while healing took place.

The boy's dark skin and foreign language led people to believe he was Spanish, but analysis of DNA from Dafydd Evans of Anglesey, a direct descendant in the male line of Evan's descendants indicates that the brothers came from the Caucasus area which includes Georgia, Ossetia, and Southern Russia.

The Anglesey Bone Setter DNA Project was established in 2009 to determine the ancestry of Evan Thomas. Project director John Rowlands said: "When we embarked on the project, all the historical evidence seemed to point to Spain as being the most likely origins of Evan Thomas. Not only was there his exotic appearance and language, but also the fact that many Spanish ships were sailing past Wales at the time of the shipwreck, in order to supply troops in support of the Jacobite rebellion in Scotland. But early on in the analysis we were able to rule out British or Spanish descent, and now, after studying 300 gigabytes of data, our team at Edinburgh University have found 48 out of 51 points of similarity with DNA originating in the Caucasus."

According to Mr Rowlands, the hunt for a more precise origin goes on. "It may be that there's a hiatus for months, or even years now, until a DNA sample turns up which has more than 48 points of similarity. But we're on the system now, and sooner or later a closer match will emerge."

Evan Thomas clearly had a profound effect on his descendants. For the next 12 generations, at least one of them has worked in orthopedics. His great-grandson, Hugh Owen Thomas, is known as The Father of Modern Orthopedics. Among other innovations, he developed a splint which greatly reduced deaths from fractures among late 19th Century Liverpool dock workers. In 1896, Hugh's nephew, Sir Robert Jones - Evan's great-great-grandson - became the first doctor to use X-rays to diagnose a fracture. Sir Robert later demonstrated the true potential of the Thomas splint, using it on the Western Front during World War I to reduce fracture deaths from 80% in 1916, to just 8% by the end of the war. He was the co-founder of the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen, Shropshire.



Hugh Owen Thomas - WalesOnline.co.UK

Sources:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-19012179>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-15628885>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/north_west/8588906.stm

Prince Madog: Legend or Fact?

By Begw Arian

Madog ab Owain Gwynedd was born in 1150 in Dolwyddelan Castle, his father Owain Gwynedd had at least 13 children from his 2 wives, and several more born out of wedlock (legally acknowledged under Welsh tradition.) Owain Gwynedd was widely considered one of the greatest Welsh rulers, on his death in 1169 a bloody dispute broke out between his heirs.

To escape the internecine violence at home, Madog and his brother Rhirid sailed west from what is now Rhos-on-Sea, on North Wales's coast in two ships, the *Gorn Gwynant* and the *Pedr Sant*. They landed in Alabama. Prince Madog then returned to Wales with great tales of his adventures and persuaded others to return with him. Ten ships left Lundy Island in 1171, but were never heard of again.

According to legend, the Mandan tribe of Native Americans had blue-grey eyes, lighter coloured hair, fished from coracles, an ancient type of boat still found in Wales today. They lived in permanent villages, laid out in streets and squares. They claimed ancestry with the Welsh and spoke a language remarkably similar. In 1796 they were visited by Welsh explorer John Evans who was hoping to find proof of Prince Madog's discovery by comparing their languages. He found no evidence. In 1799 Governor John Sevier of Tennessee wrote a report in which he mentioned the discovery of 6 skeletons encased in brass armour bearing the Welsh coat of arms. In 1804 Lewis and Clark met the Mandans during their journey across the Great Plains. Unfortunately the tribe was virtually wiped out by a smallpox epidemic in 1837, but the belief in their Welsh heritage persisted. In 1953, the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a plaque alongside Mobile Bay in 1953.



Photo by Vicki Schell who was surprised to find this plaque in the garden of a historic house in Mobile, Alabama.

2023 Llŷn ac Eifionydd National Eisteddfod

Encompassing all aspects of the arts and culture in Wales, the Eisteddfod is the natural showcase for music, dance, visual arts, literature, and original performances. It attracts thousands of Welsh learners and speakers as well as those who don't speak the language, each year. Most of Wales' leading writers, musicians, and poets have competed at the Eisteddfod, with many performers appearing on a national stage for the first time during the festival.

The Eisteddfod can be traced back to 1176, with the modern history dating from 1861. Held during the first week of August every year, the National Eisteddfod is a celebration of the culture and language of Wales. Traditionally a competition-based festival, attracting over 6,000 competitors every year, the festival has developed and evolved into a vibrant festival with hundreds of events and activities for the whole family.

The Eisteddfod alternates between north and south Wales; the 2023 event will be held August 5-12 near Pwllheli on the Llŷn peninsula in north Wales.

For more details including information about attending the Eisteddfod, see eisteddfod.wales.

EISTEDDFOD

NINNAU & Y Drych, the North American Welsh Newspaper® is the result of the 2003 merger of NINNAU which was founded in 1975, and Y Drych, the oldest Welsh newspaper in the Americas, which began in 1851. Now united as one newspaper, NINNAU & Y Drych provides complete coverage of the North American Welsh community.

The newspaper is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the vitality of the North American Welsh community by serving as a link between the North American Welsh people and their organizations, and Wales. It provides a forum for discussion and individual expression while informing readers of local and general news and events of interest and sharing details about Welsh traditions.

If you would like to subscribe, please visit www.NINNAU.com. There are six issues per year available in print (\$30) or digital (\$20) formats.



News From Wales

Europe's First Dark Sky Sanctuary

An island in north Wales is the first site in Europe to be designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary, the highest designation from the International Dark Skies Association (IDA). Ynys Enlli, also known as Bardsey Island, is off the Llŷn Peninsula. With just 16 other sanctuaries worldwide, the island joins a select list of the most remote and darkest places on Earth. Wales already has several dark sky places and reserves, but sanctuaries are much rarer and have stricter criteria in terms of the quality of the night sky. Ynys Enlli's trustees hope that the new status will help to establish Wales as a dark sky nation.

Source: www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-wales-64736076

Creating a Welsh Poetry Centre

Ambitious plans have been unveiled to transform Cardigan's iconic Tabernacl Chapel into Wales's first designated poetry centre. They come after the much-loved Calvinistic Methodist place of worship was placed on the market after falling into a state of disrepair. The doors of the 200-year-old building in Pendre were closed following a final service in November 2022. Now Cymdeithas Aberteifi Society (CAS) has made a bid for the site with the aim of making it part of the community once more.

Source: www.tivysideadvertiser.co.uk/news/23100957.cardigans-tabernacl-chapel-can-national-poetry-centre

Poetry centre website: awentabernacl.cymru



Tabernacl Chapel

Welsh Place Names



Photo: Malgosia Janicka/Shutterstock

Activists in Wales have been campaigning for better protection and use of Welsh place names for decades. In the 1960s, their efforts led to road signs in Wales being changed from English-only to bilingual. Today the concern is for farms, place names, and toponyms (names for geographical features such as hills) which are often translated into English. Following a petition calling for the national park authority in Wales to use Welsh place names, we now see signs for Eryri rather than Snowdonia, and Yr Wyddfa instead of Snowdon.

Further reading: theconversation.com/welsh-place-names-are-being-erased

Welsh Place-Name Society:

www.cymdeithasenwaulleoedd.cymru/en

WSWNE Membership Form to pay by check

You are encouraged to pay online with a credit card at www.welshwne.org/membership.

If mailing payment, please make check payable to WSWNE and mail with this form to Annie Rodgers, WSWNE Treasurer, P.O. Box 463, Chicopee, MA 01021

Our membership year begins March 1st and covers all family members at the same address.

___\$100 (Red Dragon), ___\$50 (Daffodil), ___\$25 (Miner's Lantern), ___\$10 (Student)

Today's date: _____ New Member: _____ Renewal: _____

Names (list household members): _____

Address _____

Home phone # _____ Cell phone # _____

Email address (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Your Welsh Interests _____

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Croeso is published by the Welsh Society of Western New England, Inc.

You can reach the Board at InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com.



Llangollen Canal; photo by Diane Jeffer 2019