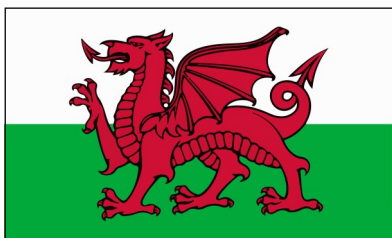


Croeso! — Welcome!



**The Welsh Society of
Western New England**

***Cymdeithas Cymreig
Lloegr Newydd Gorllewino***

February 2025 WelshWNE.org WelshWNE@gmail.com FaceBook: WSWNE

A Message From Our President Susan Davies Sit

Croeso i 2025 a blwyddyn newydd dda i chi!
Welcome to 2025 and happy new year to you!

Here at WSWNE, we are always planning for future events and are busy with March 1st's St. David's Day luncheon. This year we get to celebrate exactly on the date. We will have a fun time listening to the poetry of *Daffydd ap Gwilym* from the 14th century; he was a ladies' man and his poetry reflects that. Photos of the area he wandered in will accompany the presentation by John Bollard. Music, stories of Wales, and friendship will abound.

A beautiful standing red dragon will go home for one year with one lucky member, then each following St. David's Day he will go home with another member. And....he needs a name! Please email us at WelshWNE@gmail.com with your suggestions.

We are also thinking about WSWNE's 25th anniversary in April 2026. How should we celebrate our 25 years? Our members make up this wonderful Welsh Society, so let's hear from you about what we should do. Would anyone like to sponsor a particular Welsh band, a poet, singers, cloggers or....? Should we have a casual pub event, a more formal luncheon, a Noson Lawen?

Would you like to be on the planning committee? Just email us. Everyone welcome. WelshWNE@gmail.com is your gateway to the planning.

Diolch yn fawr iawn. Thank you very much.

St. David's Day Celebration

Join us on Saturday, March 1 as we celebrate together on St. David's Day. We'll be at the Nutmeg Restaurant in South Windsor, Connecticut with our flags and daffodils beginning with a social hour at 11:00 AM.

Reconnect with old friends and meet new ones while sampling hors d'oeuvres and enjoying a background of lyrical Welsh music.

Lunch will be served at noon.

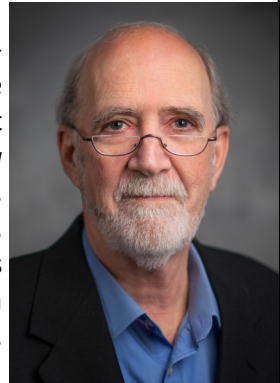


During lunch and before our feature presentation, WSWNE members who traveled to Wales in 2024 will show a few slides and tell short stories about their trips. Board member Magdalen Dowden will explain how the black and yellow St. David's flag came about.

Following these hiraeth moments, Dr. John Bollard will present our main program:

Dafydd, awenydd wiwnwyf **Dafydd, poet of fine desire**

Dafydd ap Gwilym was one of the greatest lyric poets of early European literature. He was, however, much more personal than other poets of the age. Dafydd's favorite subject was love, and he sang most often of his own (sometimes fictional) misadventures in his quest to win the one he loved most – whoever she might be at the moment! Reading selections from *Cymru Dafydd ap Gwilym / Dafydd ap Gwilym's Wales*, and showing photographs by his collaborator, Anthony Griffiths, John Bollard will introduce us to Dafydd, his poetry, and some of the women who captured, and more often than not broke, his heart.



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St. David's Day Celebration

**Reservation deadline for St. David's Day luncheon
is Saturday, February 22.**

*Please see the insert in this issue for menu, pricing,
reservations, and directions.*

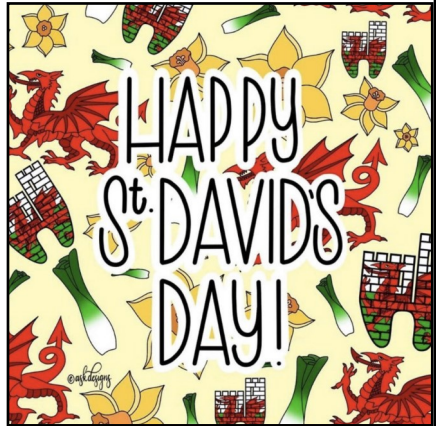
Find complete details at

www.welshwne.org/events/st-davids-day-3-1-2025.

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John Bollard (MA, Aberystwyth; PhD, Leeds) has taught Medieval Welsh literature and language at Harvard, Yale, and the Universities of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and English at Smith and Mount Holyoke Colleges.

His studies of *The Mabinogi* are considered seminal in the field, and he has published five volumes of translations of medieval Welsh prose and poetry in collaboration with prize-winning Welsh photographer Anthony Griffiths. He is co-editor, with Michael Livingston, of *Owain Glyndŵr: A Casebook*, which is a collection of 101 documents about the great Welsh hero.



Annual St. David's Day Walk

Join us on Tuesday March 4th for our fourth annual St. David's Day walk. We'll meet at 11:00 AM in the parking lot by the greenhouses at Elizabeth Park, West Hartford, Connecticut. After the walk, we'll share warm cider and visit the greenhouses which will be open for the annual daffodil and tulip show. Dress warmly and bring your Welsh flags. No need to RSVP, simply meet us there.



My Journey to Wales

By Jane Baker, WSWNE Member

In 1904, my great grandmother, Laura Madeline Pickering (Naina), and her sister Annie Jane, left their homeland in Bryn Refail, Wales, boarded a boat and came to America. She settled in Monson, Massachusetts, married and had two children, my grandmother Julia Orcutt and her brother Arnold Orwic. When I visited Naina as a child, she would give me a mint from her apron pocket, sing me a song in Welsh, and teach me to say Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch.

In 2018, I became a grandmother myself and chose my grandmother-name, Naina, to honor my Welsh heritage. During the pandemic, I found Duolingo and started my journey learning Welsh. I also found the Welsh Society of Western New England which offers weekly Welsh conversation via Zoom and Cymdeithas Madog of North America which hosts a week-long Welsh language school, usually in July, and a Zoom learning in January. Around the same time, I started researching my Welsh roots. Both activities have been extremely rewarding! I found a love of the language and some wonderful friends. Most importantly, I found a place in my heart where I feel a sense of belonging.

I embarked on my first trip to Wales in September 2024 with my husband by my side and two objectives: speak Welsh to a Welshman and find Naina's home. I focused my trip in the north, where I knew I could fulfill my objectives. We drove to Bryn Refail, on the banks of Lake Padarn, located between Caernarfon and Llanberis. The weather was fantastic. We parked the car and using Google maps and a pin location of Naina's home we headed out on foot up a small narrow road. The hill was gradual with houses only at the center of the village. At a fork in the

road, we found a closed gate and debated whether to go on. Just then we heard a truck approaching from the other side of the gate. Oh wonderful, I thought, someone will help us! As the truck approached, the gentleman got out and headed toward the gate. I told him that we



The farmer's gate and the lane to the house.

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were looking for Pen y Clogwyn. He said, "I am Mr. Pen y Clogwyn, I live there. Are you looking for your grandmother Laura?" Seriously, how on earth would he know that? "Yes," I exclaimed, as if his response had no impact. He said he needed to step out but would be back in 40 minutes and we were free to go up and have a look, and that he had something to share with me. Now I was curious, what would this man have for me, a total stranger?

Upon his return, he invited us into the house. He pulled out a folder and showed me a picture of Naina and other members of the family! He also had additional information about my ancestors. One of the most fascinating aspects of this encounter was, this man living in my ancestral home is of NO relation! It appears that my aunt visited this same hamlet about 25 years earlier and shared this family history to him by letter. Now, he was sharing it with me. Full circle.

I had wished for a picture of my great, great, great grandfather prior to my trip - laughing at the thought. Upon leaving Pen y Clogwyn, I felt elated. As I walked back to the car with my husband, I looked down at the earth, and I saw a tiny heart-shaped rock. I know my ancestors were shining brightly on me that day! I still am pinching myself, feeling fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit Bryn Refail. And, yes, I was able to speak Welsh to a Welshman and Welshwoman every day.



From left to right standing in front of Pen Y Clogwyn: Great Great Aunt Mary Ann Jones, Great great great grandfather, William Jones, cousin David Jones and my great grandmother, Laura Madeline Pickering. Taken circa 1903.

Ancient Gregynog Oak

Begw Arian, friend of WSWNE

Gregynog Hall, on the edge of Tregynon village near Newtown was built in the 12th century. It was purchased by Gwendoline (1882-1951) and Margaret (1884-1963) Davies after the first World War with a vision of establishing a center for music and creative arts in Mid-Wales. The sisters, who, along with their brother David, had inherited a fortune from their grandfather, believed it was their duty to put their wealth to use in the service of others. In addition to supporting the National Library and the University of Wales, they amassed one of the greatest art collections of the 20th century and bequeathed it to the National Museum of Wales. It included 260 Old Masters, 18th and 19th century British, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings and sculptures.

An ancient oak in the Great Wood that is part of the 750 acre estate which surrounds Gregynog Hall was nominated as the only tree from Wales to be an entrant for the 2024 Woodland Trust's Tree of the Year competition. The Gregynog Oak is thought to be over 500 years old and nearly 30 feet at its widest point. Part of Wales' National Forest, the woodland has mixed deciduous trees (mostly oak, beech, and birch), with rare lichens on the oaks. Redstarts, pied flycatchers and three types of woodpeckers are among the birds that inhabit the woods.

The Gregynog grounds also include formal gardens with an arboretum. Bluebells abound in the spring along with azaleas and rhododendron. There are signposted walks, a play area for children, and a tea room and craft shop.

Learn more about visiting Gregynog at <https://gregynog.org/visit>. Also see www.welshcountry.co.uk/ancient-gregynog-oak-represents-wales-in-uk-tree-of-the-year-contest/



Welsh Cooking

Oven-Baked Leek & Bacon Risotto

- 1 T olive oil
- 6 rashers smoked bacon, roughly chopped
- 2 leeks, halved lengthways and finely sliced
- 1 cup risotto rice
- 3 cups hot vegetable broth
- 3/4 cup frozen peas
- 3 T soft cheese

Heat oven to 350°.

Place oil in an ovenproof casserole dish. Add bacon and fry for two minutes. Add leeks and cook until soft, but not colored, about 4-5 minutes. Add rice and cook for one minute more. Pour broth over all. Cover and place in the oven for 20 minutes, stirring halfway.



When rice is just tender and all liquid is absorbed, remove from oven and stir in peas. Place back in oven for two minutes more. Remove and stir in cheese before serving.



Do you have a recipe to share? Please send it to our newsletter editor at Diane.Jeffer@gmail.com.

Joyful Christmas Luncheon

Our Annual Christmas luncheon was held at Storowton Tavern in West Springfield, Massachusetts on December 7th.

Joyful is a word people don't often use for events, but our Christmas holiday luncheon was **JOYFUL**. The Storowton Tavern is always so beautifully decorated for Christmas and has a warm, cozy atmosphere. Add our guests to the mix, many wearing red, pulling Christmas crackers, wearing paper crowns, and telling silly jokes and the music provided by *Wild Notes* that really got our event swinging.



After a terrific lunch, Margaret Lloyd stepped up to the microphone and wowed us with her new book of poetry, *Sleeping in the Same World* which spoke to us all, via the thoughts of Margaret, herself an immigrant from Wales. She had us enthralled. The book, which many purchased and Margaret signed, is also available from Amazon.



Then our favorite local folk band, *Wild Notes*, led by Kasha Breau who has played her harp for us many times, presented a delightful repertoire of Welsh folk songs and carols. We sang along, hummed, stamped our feet, and a few even got up to dance, which may be a first!



It was truly a wonderful, **JOYFUL** day.

Above: *Wild Notes*

Left: Susan Jenkins Meers

Top to Bottom: Margaret Lloyd, Margaret Korhonen, Marianne Brinker, Susan Davies Sit, Ellen Brinker, Glyne Williams, Janet Lewis

Zoom Activities with WSWNE

Sign up at WelshWNE.org/events if you have not participated before.

Welsh Conversation-on-Zoom

Level 1: Beginners Welsh Conversation

Twice monthly on Wednesdays from 5:00 to 5:30 PM

February 5 & 19; check website for future dates.

There is room for new members in this conversation.

Level 2: Intermediate Conversation

None scheduled at this time.

Level 3: Intermediate Plus Conversation

Tuesdays from 5:00 to 6:00 PM

There is room for new members in this conversation.

Genealogy-on-Zoom

This group shares research tips, suggestions, and success stories.

Mondays 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM

February 10 & 24, March 17 & 31, April 14 & 28

Using Welsh for Genealogy on February 10

Christine McSorley, WSWNE member, Welsh tutor, and fluent Welsh speaker will help us learn how to pronounce our ancestors' place names correctly. She will also explain headstone Welsh in just a few words, assist with pronunciation of names, and more.

Special Presentation on February 24

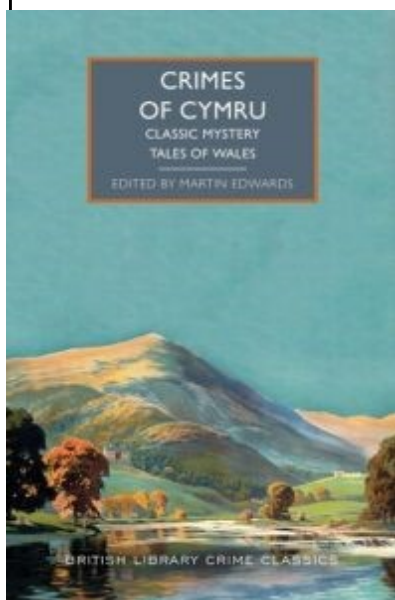
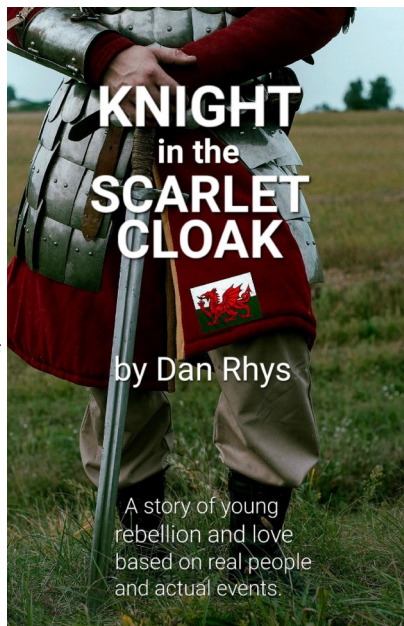
Nikki Hall of DNARootssearch.com and President of the Welsh Society of Western New York will present *AncestryDNA Results*. After Nikki took an AncestryDNA test in 2017, she quickly learned all she could about genetic genealogy. She made it her goal to place each of her DNA matches into her tree and learned new skills that allowed her to identify the birth parents of a cousin. She now volunteers as a Search Angel, helping those looking for birth family using DNA tests. Nikki specializes in clustering DNA matches in order to identify common ancestors. **NOTE:** There is a charge of \$5 for members and \$10 for guests for this event. Please visit WelshWNE.org/events to RSVP.

Good Reads

Dan Rhys is a self-taught Welsh speaker who has appeared often on BBC Welsh-language radio and television as well as on the Welsh-language channel S4C. Dan teaches English at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, California but speaks only Welsh to his six-year-old son Evan, happily allowing his wife Nikki to cover the English. His most recent book is *Knight in the Scarlet Cloak*.

In a time when the history and culture of Wales is all but ignored, *Knight in the Scarlet Cloak* presents a story of young rebellion and love that is based on real people and actual events tied to the longstanding struggle for Welsh self-rule and to the complexities of Welsh identity that persist to this day.

Available from Amazon.com.



Crimes of Cymru is an anthology of short stories that were originally published between 1909 and the 1980s. It includes selections by Roald Dahl and Ethel Lina White, as well as lesser-known yet highly skilled writers including Cledwyn Hughes and Jack Griffith. The collection also includes a handful of gems inspired by, or set in, the cities and wilds of Wales by treasured authors with an affinity for the country, such as Christianna Brand, Ianthe Jerrold, and Michael Gilbert.

A review can be found at crimereads.com/classic-crime-stories-wales/. Book available at Amazon.com.

Six Nations Rugby Championship

By Susan Davies Sit, WSWNE President

The 2025 edition of this Championship, which has a history dating back to 1883, will take place across Europe over seven weeks beginning on January 31, 2025.

SIX NATIONS



RUGBY

Live TV coverage in the U.S. is anticipated on the *Peacock Premium* streaming service at the following times.

Friday January 31, 3:15 PM ET ... France v. Wales

Saturday February 8, 9:15 AM ET ... Italy v. Wales

Saturday February 22, 9:15 AM ET ... Wales v. Ireland

Saturday March 8, 11:45 AM ET ... Scotland v. Wales

Saturday March 15, 12:45 PM ET ... Wales v. England

If you want to watch at home, see [peacocktv.com](https://www.peacocktv.com) for details about plans beginning at just \$7.99 per month.

WSWNE in-person watch parties may be planned for some dates. If you know of a local establishment that will be showing the Six Nations, please let me know at welshwne@gmail.com.

Check our WSWNE website (WelshWNE.org) as the dates approach for more details.

Welsh Population by State in 2024

The state with the highest percentage of Welsh people is Utah, with 1.72%. In terms of total numbers, Pennsylvania has the largest Welsh population, with 147,516 individuals identifying as Welsh, representing 1.14% of the population. Other states with significant Welsh presence include Ohio, Oregon, and Washington, with Welsh populations ranging from 0.93% to 0.98%.

On the other hand, some states have relatively small Welsh populations, both in absolute numbers and percentages. Rhode Island, Louisiana, and Hawaii have Welsh populations of less than 0.3%. Despite this, Welsh Americans have made contributions to the development of these states, particularly in the areas of politics and culture.

Overall, Welsh Americans are present in all 50 US states, although their numbers and percentages vary widely by state.

worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/welsh-population-by-state

Our Friends at Penderyn Whisky

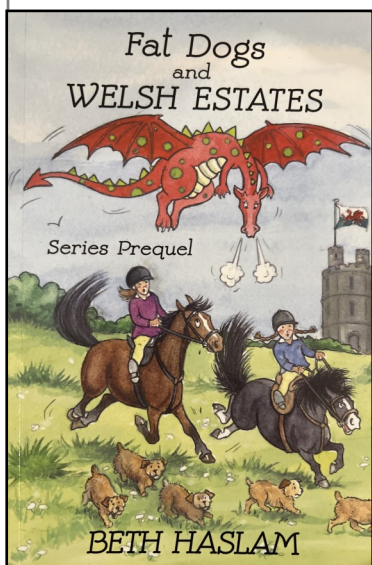
Since August 2024, Penderyn Welsh Whisky has won ten International Gold Medals! They won Platinum for their Penderyn Sherrywood and Golds for the Penderyn Myth and Penderyn Celt at the Las Vegas Global Spirit Awards 2024, the Best of Class for Penderyn Legend and Golds for Penderyn Sherrywood and Penderyn Hiraeth at the New York World Spirits Competition, the Gold award for Penderyn Madeira at the Spiritz Selections in India, and two Golds for The Headliner and Rich Oak at the Spirits Business World Whisky .



Pub Quiz Night

Join a few fellow members and friends of WSWNE on **The Red Dragons** trivia team at The Yarde Tavern in Enfield, Connecticut for another rousing evening of fun on February 12 and every second Wednesday at 6:30 PM. Details at www.welshwne.org/events/pub-quiz-2-12-25.

To whet your appetite, here is a quiz about North Wales. **Send your answers to** WelshWNE@gmail.com. The first person with five correct answers will receive a copy of *Fat Dogs and Welsh Estates*.



1. Which famous character from a classic children's novel first published in 1865 spent childhood holidays in the town of Llandudno?
2. What is the name of the Tudor Town House situated in the town of Conwy?
3. John Morris was a farmer from Ysbyty Ifan, North Wales. His daughter emigrated to America. Who was his great, great grandson?
4. In which village does the oldest yew tree in Wales stand?
5. What is the name of the stretch of water that separates Anglesey from the rest of North Wales?

Do you have a family story to share?
We invite members to write about your Welsh ancestors' arrival in the US. Maximum 500 words; photo if possible. Please send to our newsletter editor at Diane.Jeffer@gmail.com.

Croeso'r Gwanwyn—Welcome Spring

Since the 17th century, the people of Wales have welcomed spring by spending time on Sul Y Blodau (Palm Sunday) cleaning loved ones graves and decorating them with fresh flowers.

Wandering Our Website

This issue's highlight:

The Membership Page—Online Payment is Back!

By Ed Brown, WSWNE Webmaster

The Membership Page is associated with the About Us main menu item. But we make it easy to find by having many links to it (like from Home Page and at the bottom of every website page). We want to make it easy for new visitors to become new members.

A different photo has been added, showing lots of members having fun together at the 2024 Saint David's Day Luncheon. Perhaps you can find yourself there.

Visitors learn that one membership covers a whole household, that the four membership levels indicate only your level of support: everyone gets the same benefits, *but nobody gets an IRS tax deduction.*

Membership



WSWNE is organized by many volunteers, but we incur expenses by hosting events, publishing newsletters, and maintaining this website. Please consider joining and supporting our work.

- One membership covers all family members residing at same mailing address for one year (Mar. 1 - Feb. 28).

- Four Membership Levels: \$100 (Red Dragon), \$50 (Daffodil), \$25 (Miner's Lantern), \$10 (Student). Levels only reflect your level of support. All levels receive the same benefits: a printed newsletter three to four times per year, mini-newsletters by email and discounts at our events.

The online payment option is back.

Two large, red buttons dominate the lower part of the page.

ONLINE/CREDIT CARD PAYERS CLICK HERE

Online/credit card payers click the first button to fill out an online membership form, then pay online at the STRIPE online payment site. Online payers pay no additional fee for using the STRIPE payment site.

CHECK-IN-THE-MAIL PAYERS CLICK HERE

Check-in-the-mail payers click the second button to obtain a printable membership form (or use the one on the insert in this issue of *Croeso*) to mail to the treasurer with your check.

Please use the "**contact form**" link at the bottom of the page to alert us to any bugs. Thanks.

2024-2025 Board of Directors

Executive Committee:

President: Susan Davies Sit (CT) WelshWNE@gmail.com

Vice President: Annie Rodgers (MA)

Secretary: Mark Taylor (CT) marktaylorfromwales@gmail.com

Treasurer: Annie Rodgers (MA)

Members at Large:

Beth Roberts Brown (MA) Ed Brown (MA), Webmaster

Magdalen Dowden (MA), Newsletter Printing & Mailing

Glyn Dowden (MA) Diane Jeffer (NJ), Newsletter Editor

Susan Jenkins Meers (CT) Margaret Korhonen (CT)

Evan Williams (CT)

Past President, Dr. Tom Bernard (MA)

Founder, John Dixon (MA)

Honorary Founding Member, Shirley Keifer (CT)

Honorary Member, Trey McCain (Wales)



WSWNE Membership

Do you take advantage of all the benefits of your membership in the Welsh Society of Western New England?

Have you attended any of our in-person events? Participated in a special Zoom presentation? Joined our Conversation- or Genealogy-on-Zoom programs (see page 9)? Read our newsletter or visited our website (see page 14)? Taken advantage of an outside event announced in one of our email updates?

If you said yes to any of these—or if you would like to in the future—please go to WelshWNE.org/membership to become a member or renew your current membership in WSWNE.

As a member, you will not only receive invitations to our events, you will also receive a copy of *Croeso* via postal mail and discounted pricing for our annual events such as the St. David's Day and Christmas celebrations.

We hope you'll join us!

Storm on Y Wyddfa



Photo by Susan Davies Sit