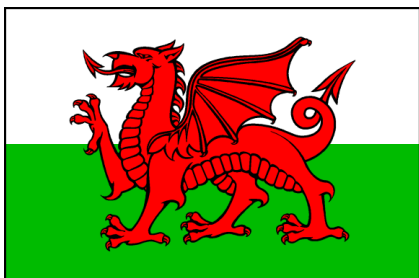


Croeso! - Welcome!



**The Welsh Society of
Western New England**

**Cymdeithas Cymreig
Lloegr Newydd Gorllewino**

August 2026 WelshWNE.org WelshWNE@gmail.com Facebook: WSWNE

A Message From Our President

Susan Davies Sit

I do hope you are enjoying the summer but for me, I can't wait until the Fall with lower temperatures and colorful leaves. The Fall also brings a host of Welsh events this year, starting of course with the North American Festival of Wales (NAFOW), held in New England for the first time in NAFOW's almost 100 year history. The festival is held in a different city in North America every Labor Day weekend. It has taken me to Scranton and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Ottawa and Toronto, Canada, Utica and Rochester, New York, and even Nebraska. All are places with a rich Welsh immigration history. This year it will be in Springfield, Massachusetts

New England doesn't have large populations of Welsh people except in the Poultney, Vermont and Granville, New York area where slate quarrymen and their families came in the mid 1800's when slate was discovered there. Most were from the slate-producing area around Blaenau Ffestiniog area in North Wales. We are proud to offer you seminars at NAFOW which will tell you the history of these Welsh quarrymen.

This issue of CROESO will tell you more about NAFOW, in the hopes that you will come, even for one day to feel the power of being with fellow Welsh people. Also inside are hints of the other events in the Fall: Owain Glyndwr; Welsh Voices presentations; Welsh language learning; Welsh Genealogy, and more.

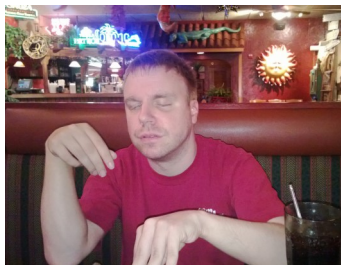
North American Festival of Wales

Don't Miss This!

By WSWNE Member Susan Jenkins Meers

If you have never attended a NAFOW weekend, you don't know what you're missing! But, you're in luck because it will be held in Springfield, Massachusetts this year. Find the amazing, fun-filled four-day schedule at festivalofwales.org There will be music, and pub singing, bus tours to Historic Connecticut and the Norman Rockwell Museum, a walking tour of old Springfield with its very rich Welsh history, including witch trials that predate those in Salem. There will be seminars on topics such as Slate Quarry Immigrants in the 19th century, 14th century Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, and the Madoc Myth and the Welsh Founding Fathers. Also, Welsh movies (with English subtitles), and many, many other opportunities to experience your Welshness.

I have attended Festivals in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Arlington, Virginia, and Montreal and Ottawa, Canada. My most memorable moment came in Arlington when we were all gathered in the pub with the visiting choir. My son, Jason, was there and having the time of his life. The choir members heard him singing and Dylan Thomas' son-in-law took Jay under his wing for the evening. What a great memory!



Jason at Arlington NAFOW

Of course, meeting people who share hometowns in Wales is also fun. I could go on, but come and make your own memories. You will never be sorry.

The Welsh Society of Western New England is the host for this year's event and our goal is to make this Welsh experience so awesome that it won't be another 97 years before NAFOW returns to New England. As a member or friend of WSWNE, if you are able to volunteer a few hours during the festival weekend, please write to welshwne@gmail.com and we'll find a place for you.

Register now and we'll see you in Springfield on Labor Day weekend. You won't be disappointed!

North American Festival of Wales Marketplace

By WSWNE President Susan Davies Sit

Away from the hustle and bustle of amazing seminars and music is the Marketplace. Two rooms this year, on the first floor up from the lobby, with wonderful exhibit tables just for you including *Dragonfly Designs* by WSWNE member Susan Jenkins Meers (selling Welsh history themed jewelry), *The Rampart Lion* gift store with Welsh flags, tea towels, and much more, *Teithau Patagonia* a travel-to-Patagonia company, *Ninnau and Y Drych* newspaper where you can pick up a copy and sign up for a subscription, the *National Library of Wales*, and the *Great Plains Welsh Heritage Project* all will be inviting you to learn more about their organizations and how they can help you.

The Marketplace will also host a silent auction where you can browse Welsh-themed donated items and bid on them. Artifacts, books, a gift-certificate for a private Welsh genealogy session, a Welsh cake basket of goodies from *Copper Kettle Bakery* and many other items will be there to browse from Friday at noon until noon on Saturday. Get your bids in before the deadline! Can you donate something? Go to <https://tinyurl.com/NAFOWauction> to find the donation form.

A gently-used book store will also be found in the Marketplace. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the Used Book Table. All proceeds will benefit NAFOW. Welsh novels, language-learning, dictionaries, folk tales, history, and travel are just some of the topics that can usually be found. All remaining books will be donated to Springfield-area public libraries.

Next door to the Marketplace will be the Tea Room, a calm escape for a panad (cup of Welsh tea) and homemade Welsh Cakes. You can meet friends here while you relax and get ready for your next seminar. WSWNE member Darhon Rees-Rohrbacher, who has played at some of our past luncheons, will be in the Tea Room playing her harp. You'll also find Welsh Cake mixes, jams, etc. from *Copper Kettle Bakery* which are being donated by owner Helen Coates, another WSWNE member. Prices will be set below website prices to entice you to try these wonderful Welsh Cakes and jams. All proceeds will go toward funding NAFOW.

North American Festival of Wales Music

By WSWNE Board Member Margaret Korhonen

Keep your eyes open and your schedules marked for the upcoming North American Festival of Wales, NAFOW, in Springfield, Massachusetts this Labor Day Weekend. Within the daily schedule are numerous music and arts offerings which celebrate our Welsh heritage. Of special interest will be the evening gatherings and concerts held at the Sheraton Hotel or nearby Symphony Hall.

Wednesday evening there will be a two-part program, a Theater Cymru production of *Parti Priodas (Wedding Party)*, a Welsh language comedy with English subtitles which follows the characters Lowri and Idris—two disgruntled guests at a marquee wedding in Pen Llŷn. *You are sure to enjoy the comedy as well as poignant moments!* The evening will also feature a performance by Bryn Fôn, a singer-songwriter and actor who will perform his songs about Wales and Welsh culture.

On Thursday evening, folk singers Eve Goodman, whose sound blends acoustic folk with elemental themes, and Gwilym Bowen Rhys, a multi instrumentalist and singer-songwriter, will showcase works in concert. Both artists have deep roots in composing and performing in Welsh and English. Come experience the rhythm, storytelling, and cultural connection of Wales with these two special people.



Eve Goodman and Gwilym Bowen Rhys

Friday evening will feature a relaxing and fun Pub Night, where Festival performers and NAFOW attendees can relax, unwind, and enjoy an informal evening together.

Continued on the next page

North American Festival of Wales Music

Continued from previous page

Saturday evening's concert, *Voices of Wales*, will feature soprano Jessica Robinson, tenor Rhys Meirion, accompanist Zoë Smith, and an ensemble of sixteen students from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Tim Rhys-Evans, founder of Only Men Aloud, Only Boys Aloud, and the Aloud Charity will be the director. Prepare yourselves for a banner evening!



Rhys Meirion, Jessica Robinson, and Zoë Smith

On Sunday afternoon, we'll gather at Trinity United Methodist Church for the Gymanfa Ganu, two sessions of hymn-singing where all voices join in song both in Welsh and English. Director Tim Rhys-Evans will lead the singing, guiding us through each hymn, while David Enlow of New York City serves as organist. The afternoon is a grand hymn-singing time with intermission for tea and Welsh Cakes adding to the warm communal spirit of the event. *"It's impressive to be a part of a Gymanfa Ganu...you must come add your voice and feel the essence of hiraeth together with others while the music flows."*



Gymanfa at a previous NAFOW. All photos FestivalOfWales.org.

North American Festival of Wales The Eisteddfod: Wales' Living Tradition in North America

By WSWNE Member Elinor Kelliher

I grew up in Aberystwyth, Wales, where the Eisteddfod is a part of life. We competed in Eisteddfod yr Urdd (for youth), and one year my friends and I won first place. As teens, we camped out in the muddy fields so we could see punk rock music bands singing in Welsh. Music, poetry, and performance is a huge part of Welsh life.

In Wales, the Eisteddfod is a living thread connecting the present to the country's medieval past. The word itself, formed from the Welsh for sit and be, means roughly "a sitting together." The tradition traces back to court bards of medieval Wales, with the National Eisteddfod tracing its history to a bardic competition held by Lord Rhys at Cardigan Castle in 1176.

The custom faded after the English conquest of Wales but was revived in the late eighteenth century. Iolo Morganwg created the Gorsedd of the Bards and included druidic-style ceremony. The modern National Eisteddfod organization was formalized in 1860, with the first official National Eisteddfod held the following year. Today, with eight days of competitions and performances every August, the National Eisteddfod is the largest music and poetry festival in all of Europe, drawing more than 6,000 competitors and over 100,000 visitors each year. Competitions and performances are conducted entirely in Welsh and attract young and old. At the heart of the event is the Maes, the festival field, where the Pavilion hosts the renowned competitions in literature and art, with winners revealed at dramatic ceremonies. The most storied of these is the chairing of the bard, immortalized by the 1917 case of poet Hedd Wyn, who won the chair after having been killed in action in France; a black cloth was draped over his empty chair, an event still remembered as the Eisteddfod of the Black Chair.

Across the Atlantic, the Eisteddfod's counterpart is the North American Festival of Wales (NAFOW), the largest gathering of Welsh people, their descendants, and friends in North America.

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North American Festival of Wales

The Eisteddfod

Continued from previous page.

The Festival is held over Labor Day weekend in a different location in the United States or Canada each year. The 2026 Festival is set for Springfield, Massachusetts at Sheraton Monarch Place. This will be the first time in NAFOW's nearly 100-year history that the festival has come to New England! The Welsh Society of Western New England will serve as local host, and we expect 500 attendees from across North America and Wales.

On Saturday, the competitions will be held in five categories: Hymn Singing (in Welsh), Recitation (in English and in Welsh), Solo Semi-Professional Singing, Limerick Composition, and Visual Arts. Since I grew up in Wales, singing hymns in Welsh is close to my heart, so I always enter the Hymn Singing competition. Visit FestivalOfWales.org/Eisteddfod to learn more about the competitions and prizes.

Though smaller in scale than its Welsh counterpart, the North American Festival of Wales is likewise a yearly "sitting-together" where Welsh language, music, history, and identity are kept alive far from home. Come join us in Springfield!



2017 NAFOW Eisteddfod winners. Photo credit: FestivalofWales.org

North American Festival of Wales Seminars

By WSWNE President Susan Davies Sit

Ever wonder what happens all day Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at NAFOW? The answer: seminars, seminars, and more seminars!

One of the hardest parts of the Festival is deciding which interesting sessions to attend—and which ones you'll have to catch next time. From 9 AM to 5 PM each day, there are opportunities to explore Welsh history, language, culture, craftsmanship, and so much more.

With such an incredible lineup this year, we're sharing just a small taste of what awaits you.

Explore Springfield's Welsh History on Foot

Join local historian Dave Robison for a one-mile walking tour through the streets of Springfield. The journey begins at the Miles Morgan statue where you'll learn about this seventeenth century Welsh settler, and continues through Court Square to the First Church, organized in 1637. Hear the stories of the early Welsh settlers who helped shape the region.

The Welsh in Early America—Myths, Legends, and History

Presented by Mark Rhodes, this fascinating session explores two enduring stories about the Welsh in early America: the legend that Welsh Prince Madoc discovered America, and the claim that sixteen signers of the Declaration of Independence were Welsh. Learn what history reveals about Welsh influence in the New World.

Slate Splitting Demonstration

Watch traditional Welsh craftsmanship come to life with Elfed Lewis who brings more than 20 years of experience working in North Wales' slate quarries. From hand-splitting slate for traditional walls to creating beautiful architectural pieces, this demonstration offers a rare look at a centuries-old skill.

A Glimpse into Springfield's Witchcraft History

Courtesy of the Wood Museum of Springfield History. Discover the story of a time when accused witches walked among the residents of Springfield, nearly forty years before the infamous Salem Witch Trials. Explore the fears and events that shaped this early Massachusetts settlement.

Continued on next page

North American Festival of Wales Seminars

Continued from previous page

Learn the Welsh Language

Ready to say *bore da*? Instructor Dan Rowbotham from the Center for Welsh Studies offers two opportunities to begin or continue your Welsh language journey

- Welsh I: Absolute Beginners—A welcoming introduction for those taking their first steps in learning Welsh.
- Welsh II: Next Steps in Welsh—Build on the basics and practice what you’ve learned. (Attending Welsh I is encouraged, but not required.)

Welsh Roots in Pennsylvania: The 17th Century Welsh Tract

Dafydd Tudur introduces a remarkable addition to the National Library of Wales collections: a handwritten 17th century record documenting land sales and settlement in Pennsylvania’s historic “Welch Tract.”

Discover Wales Through Amgueddfa Cymru—Museum Wales

Learn about Amgueddfa Cymru, a unique collection of seven national museums and a collections center dedicated to sharing Wales’ culture, heritage, and stories with visitors from around the world.

Cinema Wales: *Counting Butterflies*

Enjoy this beautifully filmed 30-minute look at butterfly monitoring in South Wales. Follow dedicated citizen scientists and experts working to save the UK’s most threatened butterfly, the High Brown Fritillary. Created by Bethan Gilmartin, this film showcases conservation, passion, and the beauty of the Welsh landscape.

And this is only a small sampling! For the complete seminar schedule, visit FestivalOfWales.org/schedule.

The good news? Some seminars are offered more than once throughout the long weekend, giving you even more chances to experience the sessions you don’t want to miss.

So start planning! Choose your favorites and get ready for a Festival filled with discovery, learning, and a celebration of all things Welsh.

Good luck choosing—and enjoy!

North American Festival of Wales WSWNE Meet-Ups

Members and Friends Gathering

When: Saturday, September 5 from 8 to 9 AM.

Where: Check your NAFOW program book for room location.

Start your NAFOW Saturday with a warm welcome, great conversation, and a chance to connect with fellow Welsh Society of Western New England members and friends from near and far! Bring your favorite cup of coffee or tea and join us for a relaxed face-to-face gathering. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet new members, reconnect with familiar faces, and finally say hello in person to friends from other states whom we may only see on Zoom.

Whether you are a longtime member, a new face, or simply curious about getting involved, we'd love to see you! Come share the spirit of our Welsh community.

Genealogy Meet-up

When: Saturday, September 5 from 4:30-5:30 PM

Where: MVP Bar in the Sheraton

Let's get together to share more Anglesey answers, discuss our latest genealogy breakthroughs, and share our wisdom with other NAFOW attendees who may be interested in joining our Genealogy-on-Zoom group.



Attendees at a previous NAFOW. Photo credit: FestivalofWales.org.

Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant

Wales boasts numerous castles and grand estates that are celebrated nationally and internationally. One historical landmark, instrumental in safeguarding the Welsh language and heritage, remains somewhat of a hidden gem. Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant is a 16th century farmhouse situated within the Wybrnant Valley, close to Penmachno village in Conwy. It has experienced a transformational renovation with hopes that greater numbers will include it in their holiday or excursion plans.



Tŷ Mawr is the birthplace of Bishop William Morgan who translated the Bible into Welsh, employing eloquent, accessible language. The 1588 publication of Y Beibl Cyssegr-Ian stands among the most significant milestones in Welsh history. It continues to influence individuals and communities throughout Wales and endures as a potent emblem of Welsh identity and the preservation of the Welsh language across spoken, printed, and digital formats.

A recent National Trust initiative concentrated on enhancing accessibility and educational resources, and enabling guests to develop a deeper appreciation of Tŷ Mawr's biblical collection. The exhibition space, now designated Y Llyfrgell (The Library), sits beside the main farmhouse and has undergone complete transformation to deliver a fully immersive visitor experience. A stunning walk-in pod, drawing inspiration from the depiction of Saint Jerome (the translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible) in his study has been constructed as a tribute to William Morgan's Welsh translation of the Bible. An original copy of the 1588 Welsh Bible has been installed within the farmhouse itself.

Find out more at www.NationalTrust.org.uk/visit/wales/ty-mawr-wybrnant.

In-Person Events with WSWNE

Pub Quiz Nights



Wear red and join the Red Dragon Team for dinner and trivia at The Yarde Tavern on King Street in Enfield, Connecticut from 5:45-9:00 PM on September 16, October 14, November 11, and December 9.

Above: Beth Holden, Wayne Korhonen, Susan Meers, Glynis Georgie, Margaret Korhonen, Karen Finnigan.

Right: Margaret, Susan, Karen, Beth.



Go Red Dragons!

Annual Christmas Luncheon

Save the date! We'll gather at 11 AM on Saturday December 5th for our annual holiday luncheon which will again be held at Storowton Tavern in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Live music by folk artist Jodee James will help us celebrate the season and its Welsh customs and lore. We'll receive a visit from Mari Lwyd and enjoy traditional Christmas crackers and decor. Look for additional details including the menu and reservation form in the November issue of *Croeso*.



Online Opportunities

WSWNE's Genealogy on Zoom

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

These gatherings provide an opportunity to learn, discuss, collaborate, and share as we discuss all aspects of Welsh genealogy.

Mondays 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM:

September 14 & 28, October 5 & 26, November 2 & 23, December 14

Welsh Conversation on Zoom

The Welsh Society of Western New England has merged our Welsh Conversation sessions with the Madog Center for Welsh Studies at the University of Rio Grande in Rio Grande, Ohio. Sessions will be held at 7:00 PM ET on Wednesdays beginning September 9. Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/WelshConversation>.

In addition, a reading club will be held on the second Sunday of the month at 7:30 PM ET. Beginning September 13. Register for the reading club at <https://bit.ly/4fivVHJ>.

Welsh Voices on Zoom

These Zoom events, which are held on Sundays at 2 PM, are presented jointly by the Center for Welsh Studies at Rio Grande University in Ohio, the Great Plains Heritage Museum in Nebraska, and the Welsh Society of Western New England. Details about how to sign up will be shared via email and at WelshWNE.org/events before each program.

September 20: The History of the Last Welsh-born Prince of Wales, Owain Glyndwr. Speaker and other details will be shared via email.

October 25: Just in time for Halloween, poet and novelist Mary Ellis Llewelyn Dunning, a lecturer at Prifysgol Cymru in Aberystwyth will discuss her recent novel about the witchcraft trials in 16th century Wales, *Witsch*.

November date to be announced: Englynion. Presented by Guto Rhys, an expert on this vanishing specialized Welsh poetry which is found on headstones in Wales (and even in the USA).

Welsh Legacy in North America

Adapted from an article by Robert Humphries and Huw Webber of the Welsh Heritage Centre in Wymore, Nebraska

It has been claimed that 16 or more of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were of Welsh descent. However, only one of the 56 signatories, Francis Lewis, was born in Wales, and a more reasonable estimation of the number is five.

On the other hand, there was indeed a Welsh ethnic community in the colony of Pennsylvania, that began with the migration of Welsh Quakers seeking religious freedom in the 1680s. By the time of the American Revolution, their descendants and more recent arrivals had maintained their Welsh identity as the Welsh Society of Philadelphia, established in 1729, attests.

Several members of the Society were involved in the politics of the revolution or took up arms for independence. One example is Samuel Meredith, son of a Radnorshire-born Quaker, who served as a general in the Continental Army and was the president of the Society in 1798.

Elsewhere in the colonies, numerous others of Welsh birth or ancestry fought on the American side, including Brigadier General Francis Nash who was born to Welsh parents, Thomas Cadwallader, a physician in the Continental Army, who had a Welsh father, and Evan Shelby, born in Tregaron, who was a leader of the North Carolina militia.

Welsh ideas were as important to the American Revolution as was the presence of Welsh patriots. As examples, consider the liberty of conscience cherished by the Pennsylvania Welsh, or the life and ideas of the Llangainor-born philosopher Dr. Richard Price.

Dr. Price's fundamental contribution was to provide justification for the revolution: no taxation without representation. According to his biographer, Paul Frame, Price's observations gave a moral and ethical foundation to the American Revolution. He was a friend of Benjamin Franklin and corresponded with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, among others. His influence was so great that Yale University offered its first honorary doctorates to Richard Price and George Washington in 1781.

Read the whole article at www.wales.com/news/united-kingdom/welsh-legacy-behind-american-revolution. Learn more about Dr. Price in Paul Frame's biography, *Liberty's Apostle*.

2026-2027 WSWNE Board of Directors

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WSWNE Membership

Do you take advantage of all the benefits of your membership in the Welsh Society of Western New England? Have you attended one of our in-person events? Joined our Genealogy-on-Zoom or Welsh language and conversation programs? Read our newsletter or visited our website? Participated in a special Zoom presentation? Taken advantage of an outside event that was announced in one of our email updates?

If you said yes to any of these—or is you would like to in the future—please go to WelshWNE.org/membership or write to WSWNE Treasurer, 35 Somerset Road, Chicopee, MA 01020 to find out how to become a member or renew your current membership in WSWNE.

As a member, you will receive invitations to our events and a copy of *Croeso* via postal mail three times each year plus a special email-only edition each May. Members also receive discounted pricing for our annual events such as St. Davids' Day and Christmas party.

We hope you'll join us!

Penmon Lighthouse, Anglesey



Photo by Susan Davies Sit