



The Welsh Society of Western New England

Cymdeithas Cymreig Lloegr Newydd
Gorllewino

Website: WelshWNE.org / Email:
WelshWNE@gmail.com / FaceBook: [WSWNE](https://www.facebook.com/WSWNE)

Annual Christmas Celebration-on-Zoom

**LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING TOGETHER ON ZOOM:
Sat., Dec. 4th, 2021 at 2:00 - 4:00PM**

Bring the Welsh holiday spirit into your home as you join our festive Zoom presentation early afternoon on Saturday, December 4. Your family and friends can gather around the computer with you, to share the music and story telling:

We will have a special presentation by **Tempest Morgan** with **“Mischief, Merriment and the Mari Lwyd”**. Tempest Morgan is a historian who specializes in Medieval Britain. She obtained her MA with Honors in Museum and Gallery Studies from Kingston University in London, UK and has worked for institutions such as the National Trust and Historic Royal Palaces. Join us to learn about the Mari Lwyd, an ancient Welsh mid-Winter tradition known as early as in 1800. The Mari Lwyd is uniquely Welsh, yet part of a tradition stretching across Europe and beyond, and back in time to the earliest cave-painted shaman figures in their animal masks. Seasonal customs with songs and the sharing of food and drink occur throughout

the year but a midwinter ritual with the horse at its centre taps into a particular vein of folk custom (<https://trac.cymru/en/about-mari-lwyd/>). Men would carry the Mari Lwyd to local houses, where they would request entry by singing verses. The ladies would be expected to deny them entry, also singing verses, and the two sides would sing back and forth. If the lady of the house allowed them in, then they would be given food and drink. **Straford Wild**, will sing



traditional verses in Welsh and English to the lady of the house **Annie Rodgers**.



We will be entertained by our very own Dylan Thomas: **Glyn Dowden with Magdalen Dowden** reading a part of **A Child's Christmas in Wales**, **Kasha Breau** playing Welsh Carols on her harp and also a Christmas gift from our friends the **Hogia'r Bonc** choir from Bethesda, Wales singing Calon Lan.



The afternoon will conclude with Welsh tunes by member **Straford Wild**.

TO FULLY JOIN IN:

- * Wear your red clothes and accessories
- * Set out a tea of mince pies, Welsh cakes and spiced tea or other beverage and settle yourself near a log fire
- * Have poppers/Christmas Crackers to pop together!

PLAN AHEAD:

- Penderyn Welsh Whisky from their full line at **The Wise Old Dog in West Hartford**. Call and have it delivered (860) 523-5779.
- Baked goods (including **Copper Kettle's mix for Welsh Cakes**, and baked Mince Pies), teas and Christmas crackers at **UK Gourmet**. See their online catalog: store.ukgourmet.us or (203) 628-7462

MEMBERS will receive a Zoom invitation the day of the event.
and

GUESTS, please email InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

WELSH GENEALOGY-ON-ZOOM

When: Mondays: November 22 & December 13

How: Join the Welsh Genealogy group: email InfoWelshWNE.com to be added to invitation. We learn how to research Welsh roots. Meets 11:00am - 12:30pm on Zoom. For info and to RSVP, email InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com.

WELSH CONVERSATION-on-Zoom

Intermediate Welsh: If you are a Welsh learner or speaker looking for an opportunity to chat in Welsh in a casual, friendly setting, this is the place!. **NOTE: this is not a class.** We use imaginative weekly topics/questions which enable us to learn new vocabulary.

Where: On-line every Tuesday at 5:30PM
THIS SESSION IS FULL but please join the waiting list.

Beginner Welsh: every other Wednesday at 5:30pm for 30-60 minutes. **NOTE: This is not a class,** though there will be a little homework.

How: To join our ZOOM Welsh Conversation group, to be added to the emailed invitation, please email us at InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com.

Please specify which session you'd like to join.

THE MABINOGI

Coming soon to a Welsh Society near you!!

The Mabinogi: Legend and Landscape of Wales

Comprising four interwoven tales, or "branches," *The Mabinogi* is known worldwide as one of the most polished and important pieces of early Welsh literature and as a source of much of our knowledge of early Welsh and Celtic mythology. These tales of friendships and feuds, love and war, explore the nature of right and wrong, fidelity and betrayal, honor and shame, and the relationships between men and women.

This spring, John K. Bollard and Margaret Lloyd will invite you to join a series of talks and discussion about the "Four Branches of The Mabinogi." John Bollard has translated *The Mabinogi* into English, and he has written and lectured widely about these tales for fifty years. Margaret Lloyd, an accomplished poet, wrote *Travelling on My Own Errands: Voices of Women*

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nov. every Tuesday-
Inter-mediate Welsh
Conversation-on-Zoom

November 3 & 17
Beginners' Welsh
Conversation-on-Zoom

Nov. 22 - Welsh
Genealogy -on-Zoom

December 1 & 15
Beginners' Welsh
Conversation-on-Zoom

December 4 - Annual
Christmas Celebration
-on-Zoom: 2-3:30PM

December. every
Tuesday- Inter-mediate
Welsh Conversation-on-
Zoom

December 13 - Welsh
Genealogy-on-Zoom

Spring 2022 - The
Mabinogi by John Bollard
and Margaret Lloyd (on
Zoom)



from *The Mabinogi*. Her poems respond to the tales through the personae of the women characters, revealing their imagined thoughts and providing us with multiple ways to enter into a closer engagement with a classic of medieval literature that remains relevant today. There will be a fee for all four sessions.

More details in January 2022 newsletter!

Subscribers to the four-part series will receive a pdf file with the full text of the tales. For those who prefer a hard-bound copy of Dr. Bollard's *The Mabinogi: Legend and Landscape of Wales*, with the text, introduction, an essay on the tales, and 60 glorious photographs by Anthony Griffiths, and/or Margaret Lloyd's *Travelling on My*

***Own Errands: Voices of Women from The Mabinogi*, both are available at bookdepository.com, with free shipping.**

NEWS ABOUT CÔR Y PENRHYN

You may recall we hoped to reschedule our major concert by the marvelous Côr y Penrhyn choir from Wales around the date of NAFOW in 2022. WSWNE Board Member Evan Williams, our primary contact with the choir, now reports that the choir will be unable to perform for us, or at NAFOW, in 2022, due to the continuing uncertainty of the pandemic situation, combined with the need to book their flight last month or not at all.

The choir does report beginning to rehearse together again and booking a few December performances on their side of the pond. They have offered to provide us with pieces of music from the choir for future WSWNE events. The WSWNE Board of Directors remains hopeful that another opportunity to present a live performance by the choir may arise in some future year.



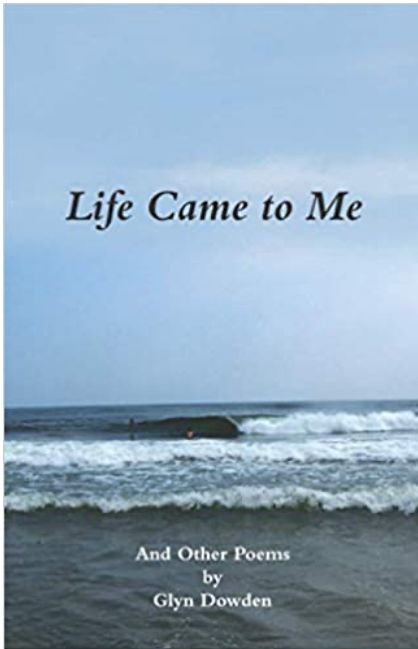
AROUND OUR WELSH- AMERICAN WORLD

To keep up with news, both from Wales and around North America, please subscribe to NINNAU: the North American Welsh newspaper. 6 issues per year at \$30 per year or \$20 for digital issues at: NINNAU.com.



NEW BOOKS FROM MEMBER Glyn Dowden

Many years ago I visited the Smithsonian Planetarium. As I sat there, gazing up into the heavens I was overwhelmed by the wonder, the grandeur, the magnificence of this mysterious creation moving away from me. And, for the first time I realized just how infinitesimal we are and how short a lifetime we have on this earth. Now as I come closer to the end of this experience called life, as my body creaks like a stem bending, and twisted petals fall ready for winter, it is with humility and ignorance that I present this collection of self-expressions called poems
amazon.com (\$9.99)



I am only too familiar with life. About death I know nothing. This book is a selected collection of words, some of which rhyme with a Celtic rhythm derived from our ancient ancestors and finally entered the



classrooms of public schools. It is a

cultural thematic that has transcended the Welsh hills and valleys, coal mines, and steel mills nurtured by an almost extinct language.

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) (\$12.00)

RUGBY - 6 NATIONS CUP - 2022

Rugby's greatest championship, between Wales, Scotland, France, Italy, and England will take place over five weekends in 2022, beginning on Saturday, Feb 5th. Want to see some of the games? In the U.S., television coverage has moved to the new Peacock Premium streaming service. But please double check as things change yearly!

Times are Eastern Time but should be double checked too:

Feb 5th (Sat) 9:15AM - **Ireland v Wales**

Feb 12th (Sat) 9:15AM - **Wales v. Scotland**

Feb 26th (Sat) 11:45AM - **England v. Wales**



Ireland,

February 11th (Fri) 3:00PM - [Wales v. France](#)

March 19th (Sat) 10:15AM - [Wales v. Italy](#)

Begw Arian - Finding & Sharing Pearls of Wales

CHRISTMAS IN WALES

A Christmas Eve family custom was to make taffy in the dark hours before the Plygain service, toffee was boiled in pans on open fires, then twists/dollops were dropped into icy cold water. The taffy curled into all sorts of shapes, like letters. This was a way of divining the initials of the younger, unmarried family members' future loves.

Games were played and tall stories told. This was also the night for decorating houses with holly and mistletoe.

Sion Corn is Welsh for Santa, and translates as John Chimney Pot!

Christmas Day would begin with Plygain, from 3am a torch or candlelit procession of men would gather in rural churches to sing. Cow horns sounded loudly before the service began. They sang mainly unaccompanied, 3 or 4 part harmony carols in a service that went on for three hours or so. After the service a day of feasting and drinking would begin.

The day after Christmas was celebrated in way unique way to Wales, the tradition of holly beating or holming. Young men and boys would beat the unprotected arms of young females with holly branches until they bled.



Between Christmas Day and Twelfth Night the Mari Lwyd (Grey Mare) was paraded around. A pre-Christian custom associated with all parts of Wales. A decorated horse's skull along with reins and bells, covered with a white

sheet and decorated with ribbons, was carried on a pole, and lead around by wassailers who would then engage in a rhyming ritual called *pwnco*, in exchange for food and beer.

On New Years Day children of the South Wales valleys would celebrate by singing or reciting rhymes door to door, in exchange for bread, cheese, sweets or money. They would carry an apple or orange studded with nuts, oats, herbs and evergreen leaves. These were seen as emblems of good luck.

Nadolig Llawn bawb - Begw Arian



WSWNE is looking for help: these positions are available...

•**Newsletter Assistant Editor** - previous newsletter experience would be helpful

•**Social Media Manager** - weekly posting on FaceBook, Twitter and Instagram (one or all)

Please email InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com if you are interested in these volunteer positions



Pembrokeshire's Landscape

Pembrokeshire's landscape is peppered with everything from mysterious prehistoric tombs to [medieval castles](#) and Celtic religious shrines.

Pembroke Castle and Carew Castle are probably the finest castles in Pembrokeshire whilst Cilgerran Castle probably commands the most dramatic location perched high above the Teifi Gorge.

Llawhaden Castle was a fortified Bishop's palace rather than a true castle with panoramic views from its battlements. Picton Castle is a cross between a medieval castle and a fortified manor house. Built in the 13th century by Sir John Wogan, it's still occupied today by his descendants.

Manorbier Castle is a Norman baronial residence overlooking the beach. It was described by Gerald of Wales as 'the pleasantest place in Wales'.



St Davids Bishops Palace was home to the Bishops of St Davids and initially built as a private residence but later in the 13th century became a much grander building for stylish entertaining. Lamphey Bishop's Palace was built as a retreat for those medieval bishops seeking solace from the everyday stresses of Church and State.

The Tudor Merchants House in Tenby has been restored by the National Trust and recreates the home of wealthy merchants trading from Tenby during the 1500's.

Other must-visits include St Govans Chapel near Bosherton. A small 13th-century chapel built into the sea-cliff and accessible only by steps from the towering cliff above. Pentre Ifan is Wales' most iconic prehistoric site. The Neolithic burial chamber topped by a massive capstone is made from the same stones as the inner circle of Stonehenge.

10 WELSH WOMEN Who Changed The World

by Historyan.co.uk

There is currently no outdoor statue of a woman in the capital city of Cardiff. But all that is going to change. A shortlist of five inspirational Welsh women from history was drawn up from an initial long list. Here is # 6 in the series of the initial ten:

6. Lady Charlotte Guest – Aristocrat and Translator of The Mabinogion

Charlotte Guest (1812-1895) was an aristocrat and wife of Welsh ironmaster Josiah John Guest. He ran the vast Dowlais Iron Company that became the largest ironworks in the world.

<https://hisdoryan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/charlotte-guest.jpg>

Lady Charlotte has a highly intelligent and educated women. Her most significant translation work was what we now call '*The Mabinogion*'. She translated into English the 11 stories along with the Tale of Taliesin. This is even more impressive when you consider she had to learn Middle Welsh from scratch to do this!

Her translation was the only English version of this Welsh prose masterpiece until the mid 20th Century. *The Mabinogion* is a cornerstone of Welsh culture, identity and language – and the importance of Lady Charlotte's work cannot be overstated.



CROESO/Welcome to our recent new members:

- **Tamara Evans** - from Ohio has joined our Genealogy group
- **Robin Jones** - of Wisconsin has also joined Welsh Genealogy

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Veronica Mary Nurcombe Chapman

Tell us a bit about your present family life and/or work life.

For the past year I have lived in an apartment in Amherst, MA. From my balcony on the 6th floor I can see the rooftops, the clock tower of Town Hall and the towers and spires of local churches. I hear the hustle and bustle of a

college town and can walk to Grace Church, library, cinema and restaurants. My eldest daughter Vanessa lives and works in North Carolina but Philippa, Rosalind and Naomi all live in Massachusetts. It is such a blessing to be part of their lives and the grandchildren all love to hear stories of my childhood in Wales. I feel fortunate to have inherited a literary soul. I yearned to become an actor as a child and so performance has touched many facets of my life. A sense of community is a vital piece in the practice of prayer and liturgy of the Episcopal faith which in turn has always nourished my love of writing whether it be memoir or prose poetry.



Speak about your origins in Wales or your introduction to Wales from the US...

My Welsh ties go back to my paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Jeffries from Montgomeryshire, now Powys. She married a farmer from Somerset and eventually the family went to farm in Nottinghamshire. One of her sons, John Robert Nurcombe went to London and met and married Mary Ann Cannon. They had five daughters and then a son, Jack. He moved his family to Wales for his health in 1918.

In 1939 Jack went on holiday with his friends to Jersey in the Channel Islands and met a teacher, Rosalind Varah from Lincolnshire. They only had a week together before war was declared with Germany and everyone had to return to Britain. My parents Jack and Rosalind saw each other a handful of times before they were married in 1940. I was born in Cardiff on May 2, 1941 the eldest of four children.

After graduation from Lady Margaret High School in 1958 I began my training as a Radiographer (therapy) at The Velindre, a new cancer hospital in Cardiff. My father died in 1960 and in 1962 I left Cardiff to take up a position at the London Hospital, Whitechapel E1 and married a medical student, Gordon Chapman and our first daughter was born in 1965. Later we moved out of London for internships and residencies in Swindon and then Oxford. In 1970 with two daughters we spent a year in Boston, MA where Gordon worked as an anesthesiologist within the Harvard Hospital network. We emigrated to Canada in 1973 but later made the decision to return to Boston and with landed immigrant status our family of six entered the US through Holton, Maine in 1976. We became citizens in 1983.

continued....

What things do you wish to experience in Welsh life or culture either through study, by interacting with Welsh people or through travel to Wales?.

My trips back to Wales have been very precious to me over the years most especially while my mother was alive but also to spend time with my sister, Meg and brother, Peter. My elder brother John left Wales for Canada in 1967. We make it a point to have a family reunion every few years, often visiting childhood haunts such as Porthcawl and Newport, Pembrokeshire. My nieces in Wales have had the opportunity to educate their children in Welsh speaking schools and it is remarkable to hear the language now spoken in Cardiff by so many people.

Would you like to give the Welsh Society a plug or tell us how you are involved in the Society.

We moved back to the Pioneer Valley in 2002 where I reconnected with May Price Howes. We had been students together at Holyoke Community College in the 80's. We both attended a Welsh Society gathering in South Hadley. Tom Bernard was President along with board members Martha Davies, Ed and Beth Brown and Shirley Gilmartin. I attended a national Meeting with Tina Davies in Buffalo and helped organize events. I initiated the tradition of Christmas Crackers. Welsh Canadian friends Helen and Peter Thomas and Ron Rees traveled down from New Brunswick to present programs. The WSWNE has a camaraderie like no other group and always has a rich source of talent amongst its members. It thrives under the present Board.

A CHILDREN'S STORY TO TELL AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The Great Red Dragon of Wales by William Elliot Griffis

The Red Dragon has four three-toed claws, a long, barbed tongue, a tail ending like an arrowhead and wide wings.

The Welsh King wanted to build a strong castle to keep out his enemies, the Saxons. The place chosen for the fortified city of the Cymry was among the mountains. From



all over his land, the King sent masons and carpenters and collected the materials for building.

Then the King set the diggers to work. He promised a rich reward to those men of the pick and shovel who should dig the fastest and throw up the most dirt, so that the masons could begin their part of the work.

But a dragon was angered by this invasion of his earth; for, the next morning, they saw that everything in the form of stone, timber, iron or tools, had disappeared during the night. It looked as if an earthquake had swallowed them all up.

Both king and seers, priests and bards, were greatly puzzled at this. However, not being able to account for it, and the Saxons likely to march on them at any time, the sovereign set the diggers at work and again collected more wood and stone. This time, the women helped, not only to cook the food, but to drag the logs and stones. They were even ready to cut off their beautiful long hair to make ropes. But in the morning, all had again disappeared, as if swept by a storm. The ground was bare. Nevertheless, all hands began digging and building again.

The King summoned his twelve wise men to ask about the cause of the problem and to decide what was to be done. The wise men agreed upon a remedy. "A child must be found who was born without a father."

They were sent in search of a boy without a father to help them with the dragon. A boy was found. The boy asked the king: "Why have you brought me to this place?" Then the King told him the reason, and the boy asked:

"Who instructed you to do this?" "My wise men told me so to do"

"Order them to come to me, Your Majesty," pleaded the boy.

When the wise men appeared, the boy, in respectful manner, told them:

" I want to tell you what is hidden here underneath the ground. There is a pool of water down below. Please order your men to dig for it."

At once the spades were used by strong hands, and in a few minutes the workmen saw their faces reflected, as in a looking glass. There was a pool of clear water there. Turning to the wise men, the boy asked before all: "Now tell me, what is in the pool?" "Your Majesty, I can tell you, even if these men cannot. There are two vases in the pool." Two brave men leaped down into the pool. They felt around and brought up two vases, as the boy had said. Again, the boy put a question to the wise men: "What is in these vases?" They could not answer.

"There is a tent in them," said the boy. "Separate them, and you will find it so." By the king's command, a soldier thrust in his hand and found a folded tent. "What is in the tent?" asked the boy of the wise men.

Not one of the twelve knew what to say, and there was silence.

"I will tell you, Your Majesty, and all here, what is in this tent. There are two snakes, one white and one red. Unfold the tent."

A few of the men and many of the women shrank back while those that had children, snatched up their children, fearing that the poisonous snakes might wriggle towards them. The two serpents were coiled up and asleep, but they soon showed signs of waking, and their fiery, lidless eyes glared at the people. "Now, Your Majesty, and all here, be you the witnesses of what will happen. Let the King and wise men look in the tent." The snakes reared their head and began to struggle with each other. The white one rose up first, threw the red one into the middle of the arena, and then chased him to the edge of the round space.

Three times the white snake won over the red one. But while the white snake seemed to be gloating over the other for a final fight, the red one, gathering strength, erected its head and struck at the other. In the end the red snake overcame the white snake, driving it first out of the circle, then from the tent, and into the pool, where it disappeared, while the victorious red one moved into the tent again.

When the tent flap was opened for all to see, nothing could be seen except a red dragon; the serpent had turned into this great creature, which combined into new form with the body and the powers of bird, beast, reptile and fish.

It had wings to fly, the strongest animal strength, and could crawl, swim, and live in either water or air, or on the earth.

"Now, Your Majesty you must choose another site, on which to erect your castle." The boy became a great and famous magician, named Merlin.

WSWNE NEWS is published by the Welsh Society of Western New England, Inc

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WSWNE Membership Form for mailed-in checks:

PLEASE MAIL to Mary Pallos, WSWNE Treasurer, 1542 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033. Check made out to WSWNE. Membership year begins March 1st, one per family at same address. Check website to pay by credit card on-line. Membership covers March 1 to February 28, each year.

___\$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: _____

N'letter Winter 2021: For Treasurer's use only: Date received: _____