

# The Welsh Society of Western New England

Cymdeithas Cymreig Lloegr  
Newydd Gorllewino



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Every Tues. in Jan. - Welsh  
Conversation -on-Zoom

Wed. Jan 5 & 19 - Beginners'  
Welsh Conversation

Mon. Jan 10 & 24 - Welsh  
Genealogy-on-Zoom

Wed Feb. 2 & 16 - Beginners  
Welsh Conversation

Sat. Feb 5 to March 19 — 6  
Nations Rugby

Every Tues. in Feb. - Welsh  
Conversation-on-Zoom

Mon. Feb 7 & 21 - Welsh  
Genealogy-on-Zoom

Sat. Feb 12 - Sat. March 5 -  
WalesWeek/New England 2022

Wed March 2, 16, 30 - Beginners  
Welsh Conversation

Sat., March 5- Annual St. David's  
Day Luncheon

Every Tues. in March - Welsh  
Conversation-on-Zoom

Mon. March 14 & 28 - Welsh  
Genealogy-on-Zoom

Website: [WelshWNE.org](http://WelshWNE.org) / Email: [WelshWNE@gmail.com](mailto:WelshWNE@gmail.com)  
/ FaceBook: WSWNE

## BLWYDDYN NEWYDD DDA 2022

### Happy New Year 2022

It has been a very long time (almost two years) since we saw each other at the St. David's Day luncheon on March 6th, 2020. I'm hoping that we will be together for St. David's Day 2022 - now won't that be a celebration? In the meantime, The Welsh Society of Western New England wishes you all a very Happy New Year, please be safe and well. We have a few things to look forward to on Zoom: learning about the Mabinogi with John Bollard and Margaret Lloyd in the spring and possibly a Penderyn Whisky Tasting on Zoom!

See you there - Susan Davies Sit

*(Photo: Menai Strait from Dylan's restaurant,  
December 2021, by SDS)*

## WELSH GENEALOGY-ON-ZOOM

**When:** Mondays

**How:** Join the Welsh Genealogy group: email [InfoWelshWNE.com](mailto: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](mailto:InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com).

- **Mon. Jan 10 & 24** - Welsh Genealogy-on-Zoom
- **Monday, Feb 7 & 23** - Welsh Genealogy-on-Zoom
- **Monday, March 14 & 28** - Welsh Genealogy-on-Zoom

## 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](mailto:InfoWelshWNE@gmail.com).

**Please specify which session you'd like to join.**

Gwrp sgwrs Cymraeg ac y Cymdeithas Cymreig Lloegr Newydd! Os ydych chi'n ddysgwyr neu siaradwr Cymraeg, rydym yn eich croesawu. Mae croeso i bob lefel, o ddechreuwy'r i siaradwyr brodorol. Digwyddiad wythnosol yw hwn!

## RUGBY - 6 NATIONS CUP - 2022

Rugby's greatest championship, between Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy and England will take place over five weekends in 2022, beginning on Saturday, Feb 5th. In the



U.S., television coverage has moved to NBC Sports Network. But please double check as things change! Times are Eastern Time but should be double checked:

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

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

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

March 11 (Fri) 3:00PM - Wales v. France

March 19 (Sat) 10:15AM - Wales v. Italy

# 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 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 OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER (February)**

**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](http://bookdepository.com), with free shipping.**

## **ANNUAL ST. DAVID'S DAY LUNCHEON**



Plans are in place to hold the St David's Day Luncheon in person.... fingers crossed. It will be held at the Nutmeg restaurant in East Windsor as usual from 11:00am - 3:00pm beginning with a cocktail hour with complimentary

hors d'oeuvres of cheeses, fruit, vegetables and crackers. We will hear the First Minister of Wales give his annual greeting to Welsh diaspora around the World which will be followed by a delicious lunch. The presentation this year will be WILD NOTES, a Celtic group who have learned many Welsh tunes for us to hear as well as a presenter, yet to be confirmed. More in the next newsletter.

## **Annual Meeting Notice by Email**

To reduce costs we will be sending out the Annual Meeting notice again by email, not regular mail. If you prefer a paper copy, please email [WelshWNE@gmail.com](mailto:WelshWNE@gmail.com)

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The Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, March 5th, 2022 during the St. David's Day Luncheon.

## **MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE ON MARCH 1st!**

There are no changes to our membership fees for 2022 - 2023.

Memberships (**March 1st - February 28**) are \$25-\$100 for all members living at the same address. The only difference in the membership levels is your generosity and support to WSWNE. Your fees are essential, as they are one of our sources of income to cover Society expenses for our newsletters and events. You may mail your check directly to our treasurer with the membership form (page 13) or pay by credit card (no fees) via our website:

<http://www.welshwne.org/membership>

## **Online Payment of Membership Fees by Credit Card Option:**

To pay membership dues by credit card you can go to our website's Membership Page in the "About" menu (at [welshwne.org/membership](http://welshwne.org/membership)). Submit the online membership form. Then click on your choice of membership level and you will be taken directly to a secure checkout page hosted by Square Inc. Here you can pay with your major credit card. There is no added cost to you for paying online. WSWNE is absorbing the service charge during this first year as we evaluate the cost. Note you can still pay by check with the online membership form or with the printed one at the end of this newsletter.

The online payment option will also be available for many of our events. And it is an option on our new Donations Page (at [welshwne.org/donations](http://welshwne.org/donations)) that offers an additional way to support WSWNE in advancing the knowledge and appreciation of all things Welsh.

## **WALES WEEK/ NEW ENGLAND 2022**

WSWNE continues to support Wales Week/WORLDWIDE, a celebration of everything Welsh - yes, its actually 2+ weeks, as one week is just not long enough! This year's dates are February 12 - March 5, 2022.

Wales Week events will be held in 21 places (so far) including London, Berkshire, Newcastle, Essex, Yorkshire, Dublin, Ohio, Michigan, Manchester, New York, New



England, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Paris, Melbourne, Dubai, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Thailand, Toronto and more to be added. In 2019, Wales Week/Paris held 4 events, ranging from social, cultural and business orientated activities. That week was promoted as Welsh Week/Paris. In New York there were some 7 events held, here in New England we held 10 events, Essex 4, Melbourne 7 . . . and so on.

These organizing events serve varying purposes – be it simply for celebration around

the time of St David's Day, or to use the time of heightened Welsh-ness to promote / support Welsh products, services, and international and local profile. So it's about noise – creating as much Welsh noise as possible. Here in New England, there may be events in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Ultimately, the job of Wales Week/New England will be to shout about what we're doing and get our messages in front of as many people as possible.

### **Our WSWNE Wales Week/New England events in 2022 are:**

- **Possible Penderyn Whisky tasting via Zoom (complimentary)**
- **Welsh Conversation sessions via Zoom (weekly)**
- **Welsh Genealogy workshops via Zoom (bi-monthly)**
- **Wales 6 Nations Rugby games on TV**
- **St. David's Day Luncheon on March 5**

So, if you are interested in running an event, or have some ideas that you'd like to discuss, please contact us at [WalesWeekNE@gmail.com](mailto:WalesWeekNE@gmail.com). We are also on Twitter [#WalesWeekNE](https://twitter.com/WalesWeekNE).

## **WSWNE NEWS**

### **Annual Christmas Holiday Event-on-Zoom**

On the afternoon of Saturday, 4 December, 2021, The Welsh Society of Western New England hosted its annual Christmas Celebration-on-Zoom.

Although it was hoped we could all meet in person this year, once again, Zoom was deemed to be the safest option. The festivities however, did not suffer.

Like it or not, Zoom has become a part of our lives. Speaking for myself and my Mom, Mary Jane Ewart, our comfort level with this format has greatly improved, and we are certainly aware Zoom has made it possible for us to participate in, and enjoy, events of all kinds. Welsh language and cultural events have made up a big part of our new, virtual lifestyle.

So, as we watched the 40 some faces appear on our screen to celebrate a "Nadolig Llawn" last Saturday, most of them were familiar. Most were the faces of friends we have never met in person, but none the less, have become a big part of our lives. They Zoomed in from all over the USA, Canada and Wales. They are our Welsh Community, and we were delighted and honored to have the chance to celebrate with them.

So to a crowd of friends dressed in red, and with lighted trees sparkling, and Susan Davies Sit started us off by introducing us to our host

Magdalen Dowden. Accomplished story teller, Glyn Dowden, then read to us from Dylan Thomas' classic "A Child's Christmas in Wales", with Magdalen in a supporting role. Next, Celtic Harpist Kasha Breau performed for us a selection of beautiful carols, including "Nadolig", for which she learned the words "yn Cymraeg".

Historian Tempest Morgan gave us a fascinating lesson on the ancient yet revitalized mid-winter tradition of the Mari Lwyd, the Gray Mare, said to exist between the living and the dead.

Straford Wild and Annie Rodgers then charmed us with the Mari Lwyd tradition's practice of back and forth singing of verse in Welsh and English to decide whether to let the Mari Lwyd



into the home for drinks and food.

The Hogia'r Bonc Choir of Bethesda, Wales, presented us with an extra special Christmas gift of song, direct from Cymru. Among their selections was a truly lovely performance of "Calon Lan", to the tune of "Like a Rose".

After we popped our Christmas crackers and donned our paper crowns, Straford Wild and his sister Andrea Wild, and Friends, serenaded us to the close of our celebration from two sides of the continent.

So thank you to everyone who made this event possible. Thank you for bringing us together in this time of relative isolation, to celebrate and cherish that place we all love- Cymru. Wela i chi yn fuan!

by Margaret and Mary Jane Ewart (Members)

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***The Welsh Society Newsletter is issued three to four times per year in its printed form plus a few by email only.***

***The editor welcomes contributions from members in the form of photographs, articles, news items and letters. During the pandemic, when we are socially distanced from one another, it's especially important to keep in touch.***

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## **NOS GALAN (New Years Eve)**

by Ben Johnson ([historic-uk.com](http://historic-uk.com))

Many countries have a custom for letting in the New Year that involves the letting out of the Old Year and the welcoming in of the New Year, often with gifts for good luck for the coming year. The Scots have the custom of First Footing where at 12 midnight, armed with a bottle of whisky and/or gifts, people visit their neighbours going from house to house, toasting in the New Year, often not returning home until daybreak.

In England in many places it still is the custom that a dark haired man should let in the New Year for good luck. The man leaves the house by the back door just before midnight on New Years Eve, walks around and on the stroke of midnight, knocks on the front door. The householder opens the door, and receives from the man the following gifts: salt for seasoning, silver for wealth, coal for warmth, a match for kindling and bread for sustenance.

In Wales the custom of letting in the New Year was slightly different in that if the first visitor in the New Year was a woman and the male householder opened the



door, that was considered bad luck. If the first man to cross the threshold in the New Year was a red haired man, that was also bad luck.

Some other Welsh customs associated with the New Year were: "all existing debts were to be paid"; never lend anything to anyone on New Years Day else you would have bad luck; and the behaviour of an



individual on this day was an indication of how they would behave all year!

A pre-Christian custom associated with the end of the Christmas season, formerly carried out in all parts of Wales but now almost disappeared, is that of the Mari Lwyd (Grey Mare). It can however still be seen at Llangynwyd near Maesteg every New Years Day.

A horse's skull with false ears and eyes attached, along with reins and bells, covered with a white sheet and colourfully decorated with ribbons, is carried around on a pole. The Mari Lwyd is carried from door to door and is accompanied by a party of people. At each door, poems are recited in Welsh. Those inside the house reply also in verse refusing to let the Mari Lwyd in until this battle of verse and insults (or pwnco) is won.

The Mari Lwyd parties gained a bad reputation for drunkenness and vandalism as they roamed the villages. This was unacceptable behaviour especially with the rise of the Chapel and Methodism in Wales, and so the custom was changed. Christmas carols were sung at the doors and the battle of insults and verse disappeared. By the 1960's the custom of the Mari had almost died out. This ancient custom is being revived in many areas, as in Llangynwyd near Maesteg. It is also being revived by students at the University of Wales through the streets of Aberystwyth, although with not too much emphasis on the old tradition of drunkenness and vandalism we trust!

The most popular New Year's custom was one that was carried out in all parts of Wales: the Calennig (small gift). On January 1st from dawn until noon, groups of young boys would visit all the houses in the village carrying evergreen twigs and a cup of cold water drawn from the local well. The boys would then use the twigs to splash people with water. In return, they would receive the Calennig, usually in the form of copper coins. The custom, in various forms, survived in some areas well after World War II, at least in the form of the chanting of a small verse or two in exchange for small coins.

## MY FAMILY BIBLE JOURNEY - by Susan Davies Sit

My personal genealogy journey began at the relatively young age of 20-something when I found a large, heavy brown leather-bound book written in Welsh in our home, in a cupboard with the Monopoly game. It weighed 10lbs and is 12" by 10". When asked, my father told me that this was the "Family Bible". After many questions and observations later that day, I discovered hand-written pages in between the Old and New Testaments beginning with the marriage of my great great grandparents William and Mary (Edwards) Davies in 1860 in Amlwch, Ynys Môn ( Anglesey). Following on from their "title" page, is a list of children's births, a page for marriages and a page for deaths. The entries were made by one of my great great grandparents and then their eldest son David (Thomas) Edward Davies, my great grandfather and then by his eldest son Thomas Davies, my grandfather. He had made the last couple of entries. The Bible, at that time, was 110 years old, given to my great great grandparents in 1860 upon their marriage.

So, on this path of family history I went, forty years ago. The entries I found were transcribed into my first family tree. There are still a couple of people from the Bibles' pages, I have not found on line such as a son who died "Off Calcutta" in 1867.

Of course I still have the Family Bible, no-one else jumped up to say they wanted it, but I probably didn't ask too loudly. The Bible pages were/are in decent shape, but fragile and now that it's 160 years old, and although it had been protected and rarely out for viewing, it had deteriorated. The spine label was detached and the stitching unravelling. The entire book needed paper repair and re-sewing. I was so worried I could not save it. Over the years I had looked for book binders/book conservators but I didn't really know where to look apart from Universities, and the cost there was too high to warrant the work.



Last summer, I started looking again. A member of our Societies' Genealogy group referred me to a lady in the Northampton, MA area who again referred me to a retired book

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conservator in Boston. Reluctant to mail the Bible to Boston, Deborah Rossi of Cenacle Bindery agreed to meet me in Framingham, MA in the parking lot of Trader Joe's.

Deborah Rossi is such a nice person, and she was grateful I had travelled an hour or more to meet her. We chatted about the Bible and the possible work it needed. I emphasized the Bible had waited forty plus years for this moment, and there was no rush. It stayed with Deborah for about three or four months. In the meantime, via several emails and photographs I watched a little of the progress from afar. I always allowed Deborah to lead in the decisions about the fabric, color for the end-bands and restoration of the pages, some of which she was cleaning. For example regarding the head band, I took the lead from Deborah who recommended the ticking be blue or red which would be historically correct. Finally, the day came to go back up to Framingham to meet Deborah again. It was a very emotional day for me. The Bible was now restored to its former glory. It looked like new, solid, intact, in one piece, all put together as it would have been in 1860. Deborah told me she was impressed with the condition of the paper. There was little in the way of dirt found between the crevices of the pages, i.e. there was no musty smell (it was well protected from the elements which if not, would have produced mold). Lastly, it had to be better than some of the paper that was beginning to be produced at that time because the contents of a lot of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century paper caused acidity which eventually led to the deterioration of the paper. These pages were still flexible.

We talked about my great great grandparents, the original owners of the Bible, and their life in Wales and his work as a Master Mariner in Anglesey. We talked about the history of the Welsh language, how it barely survived but how it is flourishing now and of beautiful Wales itself.

To help keep the leather cover supple, Deborah gave me a leather conditioner which she advised me to use, at least once a year. She also mentioned the optimal environment to keep the Bible, A room where the temperature did not fluctuate too much and not placed in a sunny area. Sunshine is good for any 'skin' but only up to a point as the UV rays will break down the fibers in the leather.

The placement of the Bible can stand up and down but has a better chance of



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lasting longer if there is room to lie it flat. If the Bible is standing up straight, over time the weight of the text block puts strain on the sewing along the spine. The photos show the Bible before and after. I think they show that the Bible will easily last another 100 years and will have pride of place in our family.

Deborah Rossi works out of a small bindery (Cenacle Bindery) in her home in Boston, MA. She recently retired from sixteen years of conservation work at the New England Historic Genealogical Society. She does not have a website but can be reached at: [drossi1955@gmail.com](mailto:drossi1955@gmail.com)

*CROESO/Welcome to our new members :*

- **Lloyd Edwards** - of Rhode Island who is interested in the Welsh language, Welsh history & genealogy.



View from Aberdyfi town across the Dyfi river estuary - Dec. 2021, SDS

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Home phone # \_\_\_\_\_

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N'letter New Year 2022: For Treasurer's use only: Date received: \_\_\_\_\_