



St. David's Day 2020 celebrated on "Leap Day"

Seventy members and friends of the St. David's Society of Minnesota celebrated St. David's Day 2020 with a noon banquet at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Roseville, on Feb. 29.

President Janice Barbee shared many facts about David. March 1, actual St. David's Day, is the anniversary of the death of the Patron Saint of Wales in 589 AD. He was canonized in the 12th century.

Attendees enjoyed tasty meals of chicken or walleye, then took a short break to check the accuracy of their entries in the upcoming Society Directories, and to peruse the raffle gift bags.

While the group was mainly from the Twin Cities area, member Mary Lou Saterbak from LaCrosse, Wis., attended, rejoicing that there was no blizzard this year! We welcomed guests from Billings, Mont., and Calgary, Alberta, as well.

The highpoint of the day was the performance of excerpts of the first opera written in Welsh, *Blodwen*, written by Dr. Joseph Parry in south Wales in 1878, using a libretto by Welsh folk poet Richard Davies. It was sung in English, but with considerable Welsh flair.

David Evan Thomas prepared the excerpts and accompanied the performance. The roles of Hywel and Blodwen were ably performed by local professionals Wesley Frye and KrisAnne Weiss. The St. David's Society Foundation was thanked for funding those soloists.

The choir included several members, plus a few guest singers. [See photo cutline for names.] In addition to hearing music of Dr. Joseph Parry, attendees sang "Men of Harlech," the Welsh fight song used in the opera; and the hymn "Aberteifi," also written by Dr. Joseph Parry; ending, of course, with Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau [Welsh National Anthem].

GENERAL LUNCHEON PHOTO CREDITS PAGE 1, 2, & 3:

(Because many photos were taken by a variety of people, the editor is listing photographers in alphabetical order, instead of attempting to match photographer with photo.) David Gladen,* Candis McLean (Calgary), Jane Van Dyk (Billings).

Editor's note: The editor is working on this newsletter as some of the world celebrates St. Patrick's Day... though parades have been banned in the Twin Cities and many larger cities in the U.S., due to concern about contagion from the Corona Virus. This is mentioned because Patrick [or Padrig, in Welsh] may well have been born near St. David's, in Southwest Wales, around 386 AD. Another interesting point, conjecture perhaps but one never knows, some say that Padrig was, in fact, converted by David!



The choir for Blodwen at the 2020 St. David's Day luncheon, Feb. 29, plus Society officers and the award recipient. Allison LaPointe, Don Barbee,* Janice Barbee,* David Evan Thomas,* Richard Rames,* Holly Windle,* Wesley Frye, Laurel Bradshaw,* KrisAnne Weiss, Ilene Alexander,* Liz Harry, Gretchen Harry. [* indicates Society members.]*

Cards sent in 2020

Mae Anderson, Kay Gavin, and Byron John

If you know of a member who is unwell, has suffered a loss, or is rejoicing due to a birth, commencement, or marriage, please inform either Doris Strong, (612) 824-0162, or Mary Morris Mergenthal, (651) 644-1650.

St. David's Society Calendar

Sgwrs Cymraeg, Welsh Conversations

Conversation facilitator: Laurel Bradshaw, llawryf@yahoo.com

All language learning levels welcome.

THE GROUP STARTED MEETING VIA ZOOM ON 3-22 DUE TO CONTAGION CONCERNS. PLEASE CONTACT LAUREL FOR UPCOMING ZOOM SGWRS/CONVERSATION MEET-UPS.

An Evening with John Dingley

Sun., April 19, 7 p.m.

Celtic Junction, 836 Prior Ave. N., St. Paul, 55104.

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=CELTIC+JUNCTION>

or call (612) 703-2147 if you have no internet contact.

THIS EVENT IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE CANCELLED.

Well-Read Dragons Book Group

Sat., April 4

In-person meeting cancelled.

SEE P. 6 FOR THE NEW SHORT STORY SATURDAY.

Sat., June 6, DITTO

IF IT'S SAFE TO MEET:

Sat., June 20, 11:30 a.m.

St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave. W., St. Paul 55108.

Meet for potluck lunch and discussion of *Flame in the Mountains: Williams Pantycelyn and Ann Griffiths* ed. by E. Wyn James.

IF IT'S SAFE TO MEET:

August 1, 11:30 p.m.,

Back to usual meeting spot, Davanni's, 3673 Lexington Ave. N., Arden Hills, 55126.

Book for that meeting will be announced after the June mtg. This is the meeting when members choose books for the coming year.

PLEASE CONTACT MARY MORRIS MERGENTHAL, (651) 644-1650,

mary.mergenthal@gmail.com WITH ANY BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS.

Annual picnic and Society Annual Meeting

Sat., July 25, 11:30–2:30

Rosebrook Park, 2590 Fry St., Roseville 55113

Check the list of Society officer to see why it's vital for you to be present to vote and, if possible, to consider filling one of the SEVEN terms that expire in July! If you have suggestions for a treasurer or for a board member, please contact Janice or Ilene.

LET'S ALL HOPE THE WORLD WILL BE WELL BY SUMMER SO WE CAN ENJOY ONE ANOTHER'S COMPANY AGAIN! IF IT'S STILL NOT SAFE TO MEET, CHECK <https://stdavidsofmn.org/>



The famous "Hywel and Blodwen" duet was ably sung by guests Wesley Frye (tenor) and KrisAnne Weiss (mezzo-soprano). Unfortunately, we were unable to record the production, but if you'd like to hear "Hywel and Blodwen" for yourself [fair play, in Welsh] Google those names to hear Welsh soloists perform in your living room or office.



St. David's Society Officers

Janice Barbee, President, 2021

Ilene Alexander, Vice-President, 2021

Sally Evans, Treasurer, 2020

Ron Adams, 2020

David Gladen, 2020

Marla Gladen, 2020

Barbara Powell Sherman, 2020

Robert Sherman, 2020

Hywel Roberts, 2020

St. David's Society Foundation Officers

Ron Adams

Ilene Alexander

Bob Minish

Sunshine Secretary

Doris Strong

Newsletter Editor

Mary Morris Mergenthal

Outstanding Service Award, 2020 – Laurel Bradshaw



Vice-president Ilene Alexander presented longtime Society member with the Outstanding Service Award.

Following is Ilene Alexander's introduction to Laurel at the 2020 St. David's Day Luncheon

In a 2007 blog post, Laurel noted, "Wales is my true home," and that shows up in her contributions to the St. David's Society of Minnesota as founder of the Traed y Ddraig / Feet of the Dragon dance group, and of the on-going Welsh Conversation group. That Wales is a homeplace for Laurel is entirely evident, too, in her cultural work beyond the society—in her Welsh Bookworm blog, in her work as a seriously skilled genealogist who also blogs, and in her life-long engagement with music.

In one blog post, she writes "I have been a singer as long as I can remember. There used to be a recording of me at about age 3, made secretly outside the bedroom door, singing when I was supposed to be taking a nap. I've been in choirs regularly since age 7. I majored in music in college, though not in voice." But voice took flight when Laurel took on a soloist role as part of a choir tour in Wales nearly 20 years ago, singing a solo in Welsh, and finding power in the song and in the act of singing.

Through US-based, summer Welsh Heritage Weeks that flourished during the 1980s and '90s, Laurel also discovered the power of Welsh language and dance. This language interest grew from her earlier study of medieval Welsh, which she could read fluently. She worked to become an advanced Welsh language speaker, with a sound sense of both North and South Wales language particularities in the present moment.

One person who sought Laurel out as part of learning Welsh for a beginners eisteddfod recitation said this of Laurel as a language mentor: "When Laurel takes you on, it's not as a student but as a companion along the way. She helped me with pronunciation, but even more with conveying meaning even with my pre-beginner Welsh so that I could tell a story in what I was reciting."

Another said of Laurel as a dance instructor: "In a group with such a different range of people and skills, she brought us together from where we were, and from her love of Welsh dance."

Laurel spurred Traed y Ddraig on from 1990, when it was one of fewer than a half-dozen groups in the United States dedicated to preserving and performing traditional Welsh folk dancing. Laurel, along with Audrey and Mike McClellan, and Danny Proud launched Traed y Ddraig when Danny Proud was President, Laurel Vice President, and Mike Treasurer of the Society. Laurel would continue to seek dancers, teach Welsh dances, and plan performances during the time she was Society President at the start of this new century.

As we know from last year's Morris Dance program, up until the 1700s, folk dancing was a way of life in rural Wales that nearly disappeared when Nonconformists became a dominant religious force in the 18th century. Nonconformists viewed dancing as a frivolous activity at odds with Christian life. Traditional Welsh dancing survived underground, though nearly disappeared from public cultural life.

Fortunately, Laurel is among those who contemporarily research, document, teach, and perform the dances. She does this as a certified Welsh folk dance instructor, a journey that was ignited during Welsh Heritage Week in 1988 when Alice Williams, then president of the Welsh Folk Dance Society, offered a week-long course that would have been spread out over several months in Wales. At the end of the Welsh Heritage Week, she was one of 11 who received certification.

Before this, Laurel had been teaching some Welsh folk dances to an international folk dance group at the University of Iowa, where she was a graduate student focusing on musicology and library science.

Laurel brought book and library, dance and music, language and genealogy interests to the Twin Cities in 1990, and found an active St. David's Society and a group of dancers trying to learn some Welsh dances. The group didn't limit themselves to Welsh folk dancing, but expanded the repertoire into Cornish and Manx. Traed y Ddraig performed all over Minnesota, including performing at the Festival of Nations annually between 1995 and 2013.

Thanks to the late Martha Davies and Berwyn Jones, Traed y Ddraig performed in a national dance gathering in 2011 as part of the Great Plains Welsh Heritage Festival, with dance groups from Illinois, Colorado, Kansas, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

There's much that can be said about Laurel's involvement in the St. David's Society of Minnesota since she landed with us in 1990, and of her overarching love of Wales. Just ask the people in this room who are part of the language group, who danced with her, who have been her friends over time, or who have sat beside her at pub gatherings.

I want to end with Laurel's own words—good thing for us she remains a journaler, one who blogs:

- 25 years [with Traed y Ddraig] is quite a record, and I am quite proud of all the people who made it happen.
- I've been told that I'm wise. I think that just means I'm curious about the Universe, and deeply committed to learning and understanding everything I can about myself and why I'm here. Like every other soul having a human experience, I am on a magical spiritual journey of endless Discovery.



Update from the North American Festival of Wales

The North American Festival of Wales is thinking of all those affected by the current global health crisis. As the information we know continues to change so quickly in Wales, Canada and the United States, we wanted to let you know we are continuing to review all of the daily announcements and updates. If information comes to light that may change our plans for the 2020 North American Festival in Philadelphia, PA (September 3-6, 2020) we will be sure to communicate with you as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we can all take a deep breath, and sing! For questions or concerns, please contact Megan Williams at our International Headquarters in Trumansburg, NY, email: wnaahq@gmail.com



Photo by Ilene Alexander.
This stern dragon has been guarding downtown Cardiff, Wales, from its perch atop Cardiff Castle since 1904.

CD of Milwaukee NAFOW Highlights Available

2019 Milwaukee Gymanfa Ganu CD featuring hymns from the 88th National Gymanfa Ganu in Milwaukee, 2019, is now available. This 2-CD set, recorded at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, features conductor Dr. Mari Morgan and organist Steven Jensen. The recording contains all the music from the event, including special music by Côr Cymru Gogledd America with accompanists Keith David Trievel and Karen Jones Wojahn; solo by eisteddfod Welsh North America Prize winner Elizabeth Feltes; and all four organ preludes and postludes.

Of special interest is Côr Cymru's rendition of "Lle mae llais yn cyffwrdd lleisiau/Where our voices find each other," the anthem commissioned by the Welsh North American Association in honor of its 90th anniversary, with music by Robat Arwyn and words by Mererid Hopwood.

Also included is the winning hymn from the new Daniel Protheroe Hymn Competition at the eisteddfod, "Tir Iarll/Earl's Land," written by Kim Lloyd Jones.

The 2 CD set costs \$20.00 and is available from Megan Williams, Box 1054, Trumansburg, NY 14886. Phone (607) 279-7402.

Update on Well-Read Dragons

The group met, as usual, at Davanni's in Arden Hills on Feb. 1 to discuss Pigeon, a coming-of-age novel that turns into a murder mystery.

The next meeting, scheduled for Sat., April 4, was cancelled due to Covid-19 concerns. The June 4 meeting, which should have been the discussion of major Welsh hymnists and composing in general with David Evan Thomas, was postponed because a major event will [presumably] be happening near our meeting place.

So....the next meeting of the group will be **Sat., June 20, 11:30 a.m., at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave., St. Paul 55108.** All are welcome! Parking is on the street or in the condo lot just across from the Luther Place entry to the building. [*This parking is OK to use. Parking at Luther Place Condos next to the church is not.*]

We will begin with time to visit while eating bag lunches. Beverages and tableware will be provided.

David Evan Thomas will be with us as we consider the book: *Flame in the Mountains, Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffith and the Welsh Hymns* by H.A. Hodges, ed. E. Wyn Jones. David asks that attendees each tell of their favorite Welsh hymn and comment on why it is such: memory of places? people? tonality? text? [*Might be good idea to bring a red/green Welsh hymnal as well, if you have one.*]

Given the delay in planned schedule, at that meeting, the group will decide when to discuss the final two books of this program year: *A Simple Scale* by David Llewellyn [orig. for June 1], and *New Welsh Short Stories* ed. by Francesca Rhydderch and Penny Thomas [orig. for Aug. 1]. The procedure for choosing books for 2020-'21 will also be determined at that meeting.

If you have questions about the content of this article, or closer to June 20 if you wonder if the meeting will be held, please contact Mary Mergenthal, (651) 644-1650, mary.mergenthal@gmail.com



Photo by Ilene Alexander.

Plas Newydd [New House/New Mansion] is a historic house in the town of Llangollen, Denbighshire, Wales. It was the home of the Ladies of Llangollen, Lady Eleanor Butler and Susan Ponsonby, for nearly 50 years.

They were upper-class Irish women whose relationship during the late 18th and early 19th century scandalized and fascinated their contemporaries. Today it is a museum run by the Denbighshire County Council.

Short Story Saturdays

While they haven't settled the details, Janice and Ilene are working with members of the Well-Read Dragons to set up "Short Story Saturdays," which would begin on 4 April - the next originally scheduled gathering for the St. David's book group.

As you read this newsletter, we'll have selected some short stories for Saturdays

in April, and shared more specific information. Our plan is to continue the Dragon's pattern of meeting over lunch, talking about a short story rather than a book - and perhaps to share in the reading aloud of a short story.

We'll host the sessions via Zoom, which is quite easy for new users to access (just ask Ilene's students!), and will allow us to

record the conversation and book reading so that we can share it on the Society's web page.

Look for information about "Short Story Saturdays" - as well as updates about other connecting to Wales, and each other during these days requiring new forms of social connecting: <https://stda-vidsofmmn.org/>.

Online Resources

Looking for some cultural connecting as part of social distancing? We've compiled a short starter list to highlight ways of virtually connecting to Wales. Each of the resources we suggest lives in either a free access space, or links to streaming services members might already be linked to at home.

Rather than fill the newsletter with long URLs you'd just have to type out, we've posted a Google document with those links, which you can access at z.umn.edu/StDSnewsletterMarch.

Radio BBC Radio Wales

- Weekday shows include Eleri Siôn, 8-11 am; and Chris Needs, 4-7 pm.
- Sunday is a terrific listening day with a range of shows to feature all types of Welsh music, and glimpses of Welsh culture

Music

- The Ultimate Guide to Welsh Folk: compiled by Cerys Matthews
- Mered: Folk Songs



- Calan: revivalist traditional Welsh band
- Welsh Language Music Day: playlists in Welsh and English, with a variety of collections - including Best of Wales, and Seren a Sbarc (Star and Spark) for kids
- Reach Out: Welsh Rock for Refugees
- A Sound Reaction: Contemporary Welsh Music: David Owen, music journalist

Movies and Series - Netflix

- *Hinterland* - Detective drama series set in Aberystwyth against the backdrop of mountainous terrain, isolated farms and close-knit villages.



- *The Crown* - Episodes 3 & 6 of Season 3 link specifically to Wales, with one episode attending to Aberfan, and one to the Prince of Wales study of Welsh in Aberystwyth
- Great British Castles - Cardiff Castle featured in episode #2
- The Repair Shop - while not set in Wales, quite wonderful

Movies and Series - free with Amazon Prime

- Gavin and Stacey (first 3 seasons) - a situation comedy written by James Corden and Ruth Jones, about two

families; one from Essex and one from Wales.

- The Lighthouse - this 2018 episode features Welsh actors and locations.
- Good Omens - series with lovely interplay between Michael Sheen as Aziraphale, an angel, and David Tennant as Crowley, a demon - both who have lived on Earth since the dawn of creation.
- On the Black Hill - 80 years of rural family life in the Welsh border country
- Keeping Faith (2 seasons can be watched during the 7-day free Acorn trial) - Faith, a small-town Welsh lawyer, is forced to cut short her extended maternity leave when her husband and business partner, Evan, goes missing. As the truth of his actions surface, Faith must fight to protect her family and her sanity.



- Search in Prime with the phrase "Wales documentary" and you'll find scads of great options - lovely images, a-plenty.

Membership Application or Membership Renewal form

St. David's Society of Minnesota

www.stdavidsofmn.org

www.facebook.com/stdavidsofmn

PLEASE PRINT

Name: (for family memberships, please include all names)

Address (city, state, zip) _____

Primary Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

_____ Please save postage.

Notify me by email when newsletter is available and I will view it online.

Membership Categories and 2019-'20 rates

_____ Single Annual (July 1 – June 30) \$25

_____ Partner/Family Annual (July 1 – June 30) \$40

_____ Lifetime Membership (one-time payment) \$225

Checks payable to ST. DAVID'S SOCIETY OF MN

Please mail this form & your check to:

Sally Evans, Treasurer
606 7th Street SE, Apt. 1B
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Send questions to: stpaulsally@gmail.com



Photo by Ilene Alexander.

Castell Dinas Brân is a medieval castle occupying a prominent hilltop site above the town of Llangollen in Denbighshire, Wales. The presently visible castle was probably built in the 1260s by Gruffydd Maelor II, a prince of Powys Fadog, on the site of several earlier structures, including an Iron Age hillfort.

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Photo by Ilene Alexander