

# The Cambrian



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**We Are Still Here**

**March/Mawrth 2020**

**Rydyn Ni Yma O Hyd**

**Do not forget our St. David's Day Pot Luck, this Sunday March 8  
4 to 7 pm.**

**American Legion Post # 55  
461 Woodford Street Fredericksburg**

## **Budapest café adopts Welsh language for a day**

A popular café in central Budapest, Hungary, surprised guests with a new name, Welsh pop music and a bilingual drinks menu on the fifth annual Dydd Miwsig Cymru (Welsh Language Music Day). Having hosted Welsh Language Music Day events with live bands in previous years, Budapest café "Három Holló" ("The Three Ravens" in English) went one step further this year, adopting a Welsh-language name and a specially curated music playlist for one night only.

Visitors to "Y Tair Cigfran" were invited to enjoy a "coffi" or a "cwrw" as they browsed a special edition bilingual drinks menu, with Hungarian and Welsh appearing side-by-side.

To the surprise of locals and tourists alike, the venue featured Welsh-language hits throughout the night, with a range of songs from the likes of Super Furry Animals, Cate Le Bon and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci playing in the background.

Those ordering food and drinks at the counter were also encouraged to put their language skills to the test, thanks to basic Welsh phrases and a Hungarian phonetic guide by Welsh-Hungarian information hub Magyar Cymru.

The unusual "rebrand" was arranged by Welshophile music fan and record collector László

Záhonyi, in partnership with Három Holló café and Balint Brunner, Editor of Magyar Cymru.

László Záhonyi, who has been organising Welsh Language Music Day events in his native Hungary for several years, said:

"I fondly remember the moment I came across the Welsh language for the first time.

"I was reading 'The Pendragon Legend', a novel by Hungarian writer Antal Szerb, and he claimed the

Welsh language had a wonderful sound, like something from another world. Before I knew it, I'd fallen in love with Welsh culture and boasted the biggest Welsh-language record collection in Hungary."

"I don't understand much of the lyrics, but that doesn't stop me. I just listen to the tune and let the words stay a mystery – a story from another world, just like Szerb said it!"

Ágnes Seregély, Head of Marketing at Három Holló said:

"We're extremely proud to have brought this amazing culture alive in our café, with captivating Welsh music and bilingual signage all across the venue.

"We particularly enjoyed calling ourselves 'Y Tair Cigfran' for a day, despite the tough pronunciation, and hope to see many Welsh visitors at Három Holló over the years to come!"

Throughout the year, Welsh-Hungarian events take place across both countries. Last Christmas, residents from Hungary's "Welshest village" left Welsh people in awe as they held a special concert to build bridges between the two cultures.

This month, Hungarian and Welsh families will come together in Cardiff for an annual celebration of their close cultural ties. Held in the Urdd Hall of the iconic Wales Millennium Centre, the fourth Welsh-Hungarian Concert and Folk Dance Event is set to take place on 14th March 2020, to tie in with St. David's Day and one of Hungary's national holidays.

The concert series is organised by Hungarian-born classical singer Elizabeth Sillo and the Kodály Vio-

lin School of Carmarthenshire, directed by Dorothy Singh. Over the years, many acclaimed Welsh and Hungarian folk artists, the '1st Hungarian Hussar Banderium UK' and members of the National Chorus of Wales have all joined the initiative, enriching the event with a wide range of performances from both cultures.

### Language expert left 'speechless' after Sky News suggests Welsh is 'pointless'

A multilingual travel writer was left "speechless" after Sky News suggested that Welsh was a "pointless" language.

Alex Rawlings, who speaks 15 languages, had been invited on to discuss UNESCO's International Mother Tongue Day.

The presenter asked: "Which is the most pointless?" She then pointed to her ear and said: "People in my ear just said Welsh. That's insulting—" "Well, I love the Welsh language and I love going to Wales," Alex Rawlings replied. "I don't think there's such a thing as a useless language. If you can use a language to speak to people, it's useful. If you can use a language to learn about people's culture, it's useful."

"It doesn't matter how big or small that community is. And I'm really proud of the fact that in the UK, we have indigenous languages like Welsh and Gaelic and Irish and they're promoted and a part of this country and I'd love to see that continue."

Our language and our culture have been subject to disrespect for hundreds of years, and this today was on national television. The reporter's excuse was that it was just "banter".

Alex Rawlings then took to Twitter to write: "I was asked today by Sky News while being interviewed for UNESCO's International Mother Tongue Day whether Welsh is the world's most useless language. I'm speechless."

Presenter Isabel Webster responded: "Wow Alex, that's what you took away from the interview? I'm married to a Welshman – it was clearly banter. Oh well."

### A new film about Welsh journalist Gareth Jones aims to highlight Wales' "unknown hero"

Mr Jones stars James Norton as the reporter exposing a man-made famine in 1930s Ukraine.

Polish director Agnieszka Holland, whose previous work has been Oscar nominated, said she felt "pride" at sharing more of his story.

The film includes graphic depictions of the famine and details Soviet efforts to suppress the truth.

It is inspired by the true story of Gareth Jones, from Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan.

He was a Western Mail journalist who managed to reach Ukraine to witness the horror of Stalin's imposed famine.

Jones was killed on a separate reporting mission to Inner Mongolia as he turned 30 years old.

His accurate account of famine in Ukraine was publicly rubbished by the New York Times journalist Walter Duranty, and the film shows how Jones struggled to convince others of the truth.

The famine, known as the Holodomor, was the man-made starvation of Soviet Ukraine in the early 1930s which killed millions of people.



Jones in the 1930's

Ms Holland told BBC Wales: "I hope that this film will help to recognise him. I feel pride, being Polish, that I am introducing to Welsh people their unknown hero. At least a not very well-known hero.

"And he is somebody whose courage, intelligence and perseverance can be the model for many journalists," she said.

In the film, Jones can be seen making arrangements to travel to Moscow after foreseeing that Hitler was preparing for war in Europe.

Despite visiting Russia to try and interview Stalin about the threat from the Nazis, he ends up following a lead to Ukraine where he witnesses the dead and dying of the famine.

"He was curious, he was ambitious and wanted to figure out the truth," Ms Holland said.

"At some point, when he had seen the reality of the tragedy of millions of people dying of hunger, he became the messenger for those people.

"And he felt that his duty, whatever it meant, was to deliver this information and this truth to the entire world. That is what I want people to know about Gareth."

Jones's descendants have long tried to highlight his contribution to exposing the truth about Stalin's starvation of Ukraine.

His papers are held by the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, and he has been the subject of books and documentaries.

His great-nephew, Graham Colley, has backed the film's production, telling BBC Wales: "I think it is really good.

"The story of Gareth Jones has been around for many years, it has been part of my family and part of my history.

"To see it portrayed, even if dramatically, is excellent because it brings the story forward, it makes him known and makes what he did known."

The film also stars The Crown actress Vanessa Kirby alongside Welsh actors Celyn Jones and Julian Lewis Jones.

As well as speaking with a delicate Welsh accent, James Norton speaks Welsh in a number of short scenes as he visits family in Wales.

While the film highlights Jones's Welsh roots and his courage as a journalist, Ms Holland hopes it also shows the dangers of propaganda and disinformation.

She said: "I think that it has always happened, but sometimes it becomes a dangerous trick of the political situation, and a mechanism of the authoritarian, populist tendency to spread propaganda, and to use different propaganda tools like fake news and alternative realities to serve a political agenda. And it can be very dangerous."

Mr Colley agrees.

"I think over the past few years, 'fake news' has come to the fore. Gareth Jones told the truth, people decried it, they said it was fake news then, but it wasn't. It was the truth," he said.

"He did so much, and he had such a short life.

"If he had lived he would have gone on to far greater things. It wasn't to be. But he made his mark in that time.

"What he brought forward about the Holodomor, which a lot of people still don't know about, they will learn about now."

Mr Jones was released in some cinemas and on digital platforms on 7 February.

## **Book Review: Rocking the Boat – Welsh Women who championed equality 1840 to 1990**

(by Sarah Tanburn)

Rocking the Boat is a delightful read for the professional and amateur historian alike. Angela V John, honorary professor at Swansea University, has a sterling academic record and these essays are thoroughly referenced and researched. Here we have six engaging short biographies of Welsh women who campaigned for justice.

Published last year, the book has received well-deserved plaudits in many distinguished circles. From feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham to poet and essayist John Barnie, critics have found much to praise. Jones explores not only the lives of her subjects but the way biography itself works. She does so in lucid, involving language illustrating the challenges of their times.

In her introduction, Jones tells us these women demonstrate 'different perspectives and ambiguous relationships to Wales as well as divergent models of nationhood'. The same applies to their relationships with womanhood itself. Despite those differences, there are a number of common themes straddling this century and a half of activist women. Discussing the novelist Menna Gallie, Jones puts these connections into context. She reminds us that 'another way of understanding [Gallie's desire for the good community is] as an integral part of the broader meaning of political, a meaning which had a particular resonance for women.'

Jones recycles the 1970s women's liberation insight that 'the personal is political', to recall the profound impact of recognising that all our lives are political, happen in ways which are shaped by our society. If we believe that life can be better, we need to change not only the political icing but the social cake.

The women Jones discusses: Frances Hoggan, Margaret Wynne Nevinson, Edith Picton-Turnbull, the Rhÿs sisters Myfanwy and Olwyn, Lady Rhondda and Gaillie, all knew this. Lady Rhondda's campaign for peeresses in their own right to sit in the House of Lords was only won in 1963; that success had global significance, removing the final obstacle to the UK's signature of the UN's Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Others were formidable campaigners for the vote. Less constitutional yet just as politically constructed were the Rhÿs's war work, Picton-Turnbull's struggles against underage sex trafficking (then called Mui Tsai), the sideways, socialist wit of Gaillie, and much education activity.

### Looking outwards

Whether extending existing political structures or working far beyond them, internationalism is a key strand. It is remarkable to see these women campaigning to improve conditions in India and Malaya, reporting on the conflicts of Northern Ireland or connecting with Black activists for civil rights in the United States.

These concerns were sometimes rooted in religion and Empire. Despite her preaching, Picton-Turnbull developed a wide range of badly needed services in India. Much as Wilberforce, the lionised champion of abolition, was fundamentally a missionary, such women improved the lives of many even while supporting the overall machinery of colonialism.

With this caveat, the evidence of Rocking the Cradle gives the lie to claims that first or second wave feminists were unconcerned with matters beyond their own class and colour. From 1919-1920 Myfanwy Rhÿs worked with war victims in remote Serbia. Alongside her pioneering career as a doctor, Hoggan was close to W. E. B. Dubois and was closely involved in improving race relations at home and abroad. Nevinson organised London dairymaids and was a Poor Law Guardian for decades. There are many other examples throughout these histories.

Such experiences also emphasise the internationalism of many Welsh families at that time. Of course, most of those overseas adventures had been military and male, but such women carved out their own connections.

Education is as important in these histories as the vote itself. For all these women, access to education was itself a challenge, alongside a commitment to improving education for other women. Hoggan had to gain her medical licence in Dublin, and practiced in Prague and Paris before returning to London to work alongside Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. She also played a significant role in creating a pyramid of school opportunities for Welsh girls, not least to encourage better teaching.

Olwen Rhÿs was an early assessor for the Central Welsh Board of Education, which created secondary schools in Wales some years before a state system was introduced in England. She and her sister Myfanwy, despite prize-winning work, could not receive degrees as Cambridge University denied them to female graduates until 1948.

It is a shocking reminder to see how recently these changes came about and emphasises the importance of fighting to defend such victories. Today the UN recognises girls' education as a fundamental

development goal. We still have a long way to go but in this country we enjoy the basics of a universal system, available as much to girls as boys. Our inheritance owes much to women such as these.

### Welshness

Not all these women were born in Wales and only three of them spoke the language. Welsh itself does not appear central to their self-conception, though Jones quotes Gallie, who published in English, saying 'I wrote and spoke with a Welsh accent'.

The accent is pervasive whatever language and stage we examine, although their Welshness, their essential roles in our history and the role of Wales in their lives, is drawn elsewhere. Affinity ('the Celtic passion for pedigree' as Jones quotes Myfanwy Rhÿs), hiraeth, roots all count for more for these women. Their self-assertion and campaigns for social justice are both born of their conception of themselves as Welsh women, and influences the battles they pick.

I found this reassuring, as a Welsh learner. The importance and position of Wales comes from multiple sources and can be strong in different arenas, just as feminism centres women but not all feminists have the same priorities.

The women who rocked the boat were unapologetic, determined and unyielding in their commitment to fight for women, social justice and their beliefs. All of them did good in Wales and far beyond. When historians look back from the mid-21st century, what will they say about the Wales we are making today?

### **OPINION: Why Wales should have the power to make St. David's Day a national holiday**

(Gareth Ceidiog Hughes- Nation Cymru)

We're not allowed to have a bank holiday for St David's Day because Westminster deems it so.

This is just one of a litany of indignities inflicted by the Westminster elite on Wales, and it may seem like a relatively trivial one.

You could argue that it's just a bank holiday after all. But I would contend it tells us something rather important about how Wales is treated.

St David's Day is when we celebrate the patron saint of Wales. I'm not religious in the slightest, but I do see it as a significant day nonetheless, as an expression of Welsh identity and a way of bringing us together as a nation. It is a way of affirming our common bond, and all that good stuff.

I am also rather fond of David's motto "Gwnewch y pethau bychain", which means 'do the small things'. The small things matter, because they very often tell a bigger story. A small act of kindness, an act that displays thoughtfulness and generosity of spirit, can be the difference between someone having a good and a bad day. Small acts of kindness also accumulate if done often enough. They can be transformative. After all, if we cannot even get the small things right, it does not bode well for the big ones.

Team Sky, as it was known, embodied the philosophy of marginal gains, and this led to it dominating the Tour de France. It included eating the right food, and even having the right pillows on their beds. The success of our very own Welsh hero, Tour de France winner Geraint Thomas, is an expression of this philosophy.

Unfortunately, Wales is a country that has had marginal losses and more inflicted upon it by Westminster for a very long time indeed. So, the bank holiday may seem like something small, but it tells us something important.

It is quite something when a nation is not allowed to have one day to express its identity. Just think about how ridiculously unfair that is for a moment. How little regard they must have for us. The low esteem with which we're held is palpable.

If they're not willing to grant something as small and eminently reasonable as a bank holiday, is it any wonder that they're unwilling to invest sufficiently in our infrastructure.

Whenever Westminster refuses to give Wales a bank holiday to celebrate St David's Day, or refuses to devolve the power for it to bring it about itself, I am reminded of the myriad of ways in Welsh identity is marginalised by the British state. Our national anthem is not played at the Olympics, nor our flag flown. There is no representation of Wales on our currency. My passport does not say that I am a citizen of Wales. We in Wales are treated as if we do not exist.

This pervasive elision of Welsh identity is illustrative of the profoundly unequal power dynamic within the UK, and the lack of respect with which Wales is treated. This has profound implications for the people of Wales. Wales is one of the poorest countries in Europe. We are even poorer than Latvia. Child poverty is at around 30 per cent. We have the highest rate of imprisonment in western Europe.

Not only is Westminster not sorting this stuff out; it can't even sort out a bloody bank holiday. Westminster won't even do the small things for us, let

alone the big things. This is not exactly in keeping with the spirit of St David.

To prevent Wales from having a bank holiday to celebrate St David's Day is an act of extraordinary pettiness. Whether Wales has one or not should not be up to a bunch of bureaucrats or politicians in Westminster. It should be a decision for us and us alone.

We should take a leaf out of David's book (no I'm not talking about the Bible) and do the small things. Yes, there things that are in our power to do, but in far too many cases we are prevented from doing so. We need the power to do them, as well as the power to do the big things. The small things matter.

We need to take control of our bank holidays, and much more besides.

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