

The Cambrian



A Publication of the Welsh Society of Fredericksburg VA Inc.

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A 501c3 organization

We Are Still Here

August/Awst 2019

Rydyn Ni Yma O Hyd

August Meeting

The August meeting will be our annual Society potluck "picnic" on Sunday, August 18 from 3-6 pm at the American Legion Post on Woodford Street.- Please let Jeannette know what you plan to bring and how many are coming by Thursday, August 15.

Welsh independence movement given 'momentous' boost by Caernarfon rally

By Branwen Jones

Huge crowds took to the streets on the 27th of July to show their support for Welsh independence. It is estimated 8,000 marchers turned out in Caernarfon to back the pro-independence rally- far surpassing a similar march in Cardiff in May that saw 3,000 attending. The AUOB Cymru (All Under One Banner) march was described by pro-independence campaigners as "momentous".

The rally saw marchers begin their journey from Victoria Dock's car park then to Balaclava Road, Northgate Street, Palace Street, Castle Ditch, Castle Hill, before arriving at the Castle Square. The guest speakers invited to give speeches included folk legendary singer Dafydd Iwan, poet Gwion Hallam, and Scottish comedian and political activist Hardeep Singh Kohli. Hardeep Singh Kohli and supporters at the Welsh independence march in Caernarfon (Image: Arwyn Roberts/North Wales Live) During his speech, Kohli shared his interests in Scottish independence with the crowd.

He said: "We are not marching with you, we are marching beside you.

"We will carry you with us."

Supporters from as far as Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and even Scotland came to the event. One campaigner, called Christine Moore, had travelled from the Ogmere Valley near Bridgend to attend the event.

She was also a flag bearer at the march, and was said to be pleased with the event's outcome. She said: "This feels absolutely 'arbennig (amazing)'. "I was so amazed with the turnout for Cardiff, but this is so special.

"We've experienced such a great and fantastic atmosphere. "The police have been superb with us as well." Hundreds of people were waving the Welsh flag to show their support for independence Talat Chaudhri, who is originally from Essex, has been living in Aberystwyth for nearly 20 years.

He comes from a Punjabi background and came to the event "like everyone else" to show his support for Welsh independence.

He said: "I come from an ethnic minority group, and so I wanted to show that the new Wales could be for everyone."

"A new Wales could be a more vibrant and welcoming country."

One of the event's organisers, Gwion Hallam, found the event to be 'fantastic'.

He said "It has been lovely seeing people working together in such a positive way.

"People of different parties, different cultures and languages.

"I hope this is a step, albeit be small, into the right direction.

"Thank you all that came!" At the end of the march, organisers revealed that another AUOB Cymru rally is set to take place in the near future.

A Welsh TV show is filming in a Wisconsin village of fewer than 2,600 people

A Wisconsin village of fewer than 2,600 is getting its moment in the spotlight.

"Codi Hwyl," a TV series on S4C, the Welsh language network in Wales, is filming in Waukesha County's Wales this week.

The show, which is in its seventh season, follows actor John Pierce Jones and comedian and entertainer Dilwyn Morgan on sailboat adventures to places like Brittany, Ireland and Scotland, said Inge Hanson, the program's producer and Jones' wife.

The show's title means "to raise the sail" or "raise your spirits," she said.

Hanson described Jones as bombastic and prone to outbursts, and Morgan as calm and capable.

"They're like the Welsh 'Odd Couple,'" she laughed.

This season, instead of traveling by water, the duo is taking an RV on a road trip from New York to Wisconsin.

"We're visiting iconic American places and locations, but at the same time, a lot of them have connections to Wales," she said.

She found out about Wales, Wisconsin, from David Parry of The Chicago Tafia Welsh Society.

When she visited the Wisconsin community on a scouting trip, she came across the flag of Wales, street signs with Welsh names and Dee Nierzwicki, owner of Pedal's Inn Bed and Breakfast.

"It's just kind of unexpected, but really wonderful at the same time," Hanson said.

Nierzwicki's inn was built in the late 1800s by the the Elias family, Wales' first Welsh settlers.

"For people from Wales, it's very interesting for them to see a community that has held onto the traditions or held onto their connection to Wales," Hanson said.

She decided to include the inn on the show, and make Wisconsin the final stop of the trip.

Besides checking out the inn itself, which still has some Welsh craftsmanship, the hosts will look at artifacts from the Elias family, such as portraits, a will and a diploma, said Nierzwicki, who will make an appearance on the program.

"It's not often that you get pulled into such a moment in time where what you have is of interest to someone on the other side of the world," she said.

"It's exciting."

The episode will also feature the Wales Genesee Fire Department, Old World Wisconsin in Eagle to find out how the Welsh were involved in the Milwaukee brewing industry, and a Harley-Davidson Museum bike night in Milwaukee.

"We're trying to do things that are associated with Wisconsin, but at the same time have an interest to our Welsh audience," Hanson said.

The series will air in December. If you're interested in seeing the Wisconsin episode, Hanson said it will be posted on the "Codi Hwyl" Facebook page.

Welsh rapper brought into schools to help boost language skills

Schoolchildren across Wales are being encouraged to experiment more with the Welsh language, in the form of beat-boxing and rap.

It's part of ambitious plans to increase the number of Welsh speakers; the Welsh Governments wants a million by 2050.

In Swansea, year five pupils at Ysgol y Login Fach in Waunarlwydd were treated to a masterclass by professional rapper and beat-boxer Ed Holden, also known as Mr Phormula.

His music, performed through the medium of Welsh, has seen him perform all around the world.

He says using Welsh has often provided him with an edge over competitors.

Earlier this year the pupils won a rap challenge, designed to encourage students to write and perform a song about their hometown.

The project was organised by ERW (Education through Regional Working), and organisers say experimenting with words can help show young people that Welsh is relevant, and not "something that exists solely to pass assessments or gain qualifications."

The teaching of the Welsh language is one of our education system's strengths, but we must continue to develop this area in accordance with the new curriculum and to meet the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out by the Welsh Government.

Gwen's mud-filled horror gives us a slice of Welsh history on screen

Review of Movie Gwen

By: Ben Gregory

Over the last week, I have been fortunate enough to attend three events which tells us a lot about the film industry in Wales.

Last Monday I sat in the audience in Cardiff in the annual get together of IntoFilm Cymru, the charity which carries out outstanding work with young people promoting all things cinematic in schools and beyond.

The main speaker was Lynwen Brennan from Tenby, IntoFilm Cymru's newest Ambassador. Lynwen is the Executive Vice President of George Lucas's family of companies (LucasFilm, Industrial Light and Magic etc). Which makes her probably the most powerful women in global cinema.

She told the children and young people there has never been a better time to think about a career in film. Production in Wales is booming, and there is a shortage of workers in all the trades which support film-making on an industrial scale.

At the end of the week Gwyl Arall in Caernarfon included a session with Jon Gower interviewing Karl Francis, the Bedwas film-maker, about his long and colourful career in film. The festival also screened his 2008 feature, *Hope Eternal*, a madly ambitious work in six languages filmed in five countries (four in Southern Africa and Wales), funded by S4C.

It's not an easy watch, a tale in part of genocide and child-trafficking, and a Welsh doctor and a Madagascan nurse and her daughter caught up in the middle of events beyond their control. Though it is uneven in parts, the film sits easily in Karl Francis work over four decades, politically committed, telling big stories on small budgets.

His work includes multiple films about Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as productions abroad such as *Hope Eternal* and *One of the Hollywood Ten*. His first feature in 1977, *Above Us the Earth*, has been voted one of the best films ever produced in Wales.

With his longevity and breadth of work in film and TV, it's not a stretch to see him in the same company as Ken Loach or the Dardenne brothers.

The third event was mid-week, in Pontio in Bangor. It was a preview of *Gwen*, a first feature by William McGregor.

Filmed in Snowdonia, the landscape is monumental, looming out of the November rain, snow and fog. It tells the story of a mother and two daughters, whose husband has gone to fight in the Crimea. Little by little they are forced off their land, part of the enclosure of Snowdonia for slate quarrying.

The film contains two strong performances, by young actor Eleanor Worthington-Cox, and Maxine Peake, who is never less than excellent. The men are reduced to little more than walk-on parts compared to these, including Richard Harrington.

Harrington was the male lead in *Hope Eternal*, but in *Gwen*, despite being on screen in many scenes, hardly utters a word.

Talent

There's no doubt that McGregor, who hails from Norfolk, is a director to watch. He's included in this month's Sight and Sound review of the 'new voices shaking up UK film'. *Gwen* is hard to categorise, a mix of costume drama and the supernatural.

If this month's must-see Midsommar finds its horror in vibrant colours and Scandanavian

sunshine, *Gwen* is all browns, its mud-filled horror coming from the extreme conditions that the family has to endure, and the economic forces that will crush them.

Gwen, like *Hope Eternal*, is well worth seeing, though it has its faults. The film, set in 1850s Snowdonia, is in English, with Welsh reduced to the margins. But that's how mainstream cinema (even independent films) works.

To get the funding they have to have talent attached – and Maxine Peake is one of the best actors working in the UK at the moment. With backing even from the likes of FilmCymru and the BFI, there has to be hope of making at least some of the money back. It took McGregor and his producer eight years to find the money for the project.

It's interesting to compare *Gwen* with two other historic productions I've recently caught up with on Netflix. *Black 47* is set in the Irish famine, and in feel and look, at least for the first part, is similar to *Gwen*. The second, *Rebellion*, produced by RTE, told the story of the Easter Rising and its aftermath. Although it was not particularly well-received in the Republic, it is made on a scale hard to imagine in Wales.

This is nothing new. Paul Turner (who's *Hedd Wyn* is another in the running for best ever Welsh film) tried and failed to make a biopic about Owain Glyndwr, It's also been reported that Gareth Evans (of *Raid* fame) wants to make a biopic about Glyn-dwr as well.

Under present conditions though, it's hard to see how the funding can come together for most films which seek to tell stories from Welsh history in either Welsh or English, especially on an epic scale. The challenge for most Welsh fim-makers is how to rustle up between £500,000 and £2 million to make any film which has ambitions to take place in more than several locations with a handful of actors.

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